

TUC hot air NO!

Workers Sanctions YES



THE TUC has a pathetic record of solidarity with the black masses in South Africa. Who can deny it? When Botha imposed a state of emergency the TUC merely pleaded to Thatcher for the umpteenth time to save Britain's honour by imposing sanctions.

Thus during the Commonwealth mini-summit it predictably organised a token picket calling for Thatcher to act. This buck passing meant that after Botha's goons had rounded up thousands of trade unionists and democrats the TUC could only respond by sending a 'fact finding' mission to South Africa — to show why Thatcher should do something.

This 'solidarity' is more than pathetic it is an insult to all trade unionists, all fighters for liberation, indeed to all blacks in South Africa. Thatcher is Botha's most important ally, British imperialism laid the foundations for apartheid and is today the leading investor in South Africa. This means British workers have a particular responsibility to fight for its class brothers and sisters in South Africa.

No wonder when Cyril Ramaphose and James Motatsi, the leaders of the South African NUM, visited Britain, they pulled no punches. "The British people as a nation have done nothing to assist us

in achieving our liberation." As to the TUC: "When it comes to South Africa" said Ramaphose "we have always seen the British TUC vacillate and unable to make a right decision, holding back and not stiking out, and going many steps backwards." Most importantly he insisted: "if the 'honourable' Mrs Thatcher will not impose sanctions, then the working class in Britain must."

How has the TUC responded to this? Has it called its affiliates to follow the lead of the Dunnes strikers, Nupe members in Portsmouth and Aberdeen seamen? No. Has it set up working meetings to organise a trade union boycott of trade with apartheid? No. Has it began preparations for strike action to force Thatcher's hand on sanctions? Again no.

The TUC's 'solidarity' has if anything taken another step back. It is now advising trade union trustees on pension funds to urge disinvestment from South Africa. Like greedy capitalists in the Thatcherite mould its case is that South Africa is a "bad investment". So, instead of taking a lead and winning workers in Britain to impose their own sanctions, as asked for by the leaders of workers in South Africa, the TUC has set itself up as an advisory panel for monopoly capitalism.

Surely the role of the TUC is not to go into the pros and cons of exploiting South African workers with the bosses of some of the City's biggest institutions. Surely it should be doing its utmost to deliver the sort of solidarity workers in South Africa are rightly demanding. But the TUC prefers impotent pleas to Thatcher and hobnobbing with the "key investment decision makers" to action. At the end of the day this must cast doubt on its claims to stand with the black masses.

Perhaps its leaders dread workers in Britain actively siding with the revolution in South Africa just as much as Thatcher's Cabinet? Certainly a revolution in South Africa would be a body blow to capitalism in Britain, and as good patriots and loyal subjects of the queen, this is the last thing Willis and other blustering bureaucrats want to see, let alone support.

Militant workers, friends of the black masses in South Africa, must therefore not pass the buck to the TUC as the TUC passes the buck to the Tories. The situation in South Africa demands action by workers in Britain now, not when we have persuaded the TUC to do something.

This does not mean we should

ignore the TUC, prematurely try to circumvent it. We can and must demand decisive action from the TUC. But our best method of persuasion on TUC fat cats is exactly the same as we should employ on the government — working class power.

We must win workers to take their lead, not from the TUC, but from the Dunnes strikers, the Portsmouth health workers and all other groups who have taken action against trade with apartheid. These actions must be the starting point for those who really wish to deliver solidarity to the heroic black masses in South Africa.

Let us answer the bureaucrats and their hot air with rank and file initiative and direct action. Let us force the TUC to follow us and answer government support for Botha with a general strike demanding comprehensive sanctions. We must immediately:

- Draw working class militants and working class organisations into the local branches of the Anti-Apartheid Movement. Form workplace AAM groups.
- Involve and forge links with local black organisations.
- Research and then publish lists of South African links, trade and goods used by local employers.
- Organise delegations of local

trade unionists and supporters of the South African liberation movement to all union organisations in these workplaces.

● AAM branches should form local Action Committees to coordinate the blacking of trade with apartheid. These should as quickly as possible be based on elected and recallable delegates from trade union branches, unemployed workers' groups, trade councils, shop stewards committees and all working class organisations.

● Tours should be laid on for Sactu and other South African trade union speakers in every city and town, especially to workplaces explaining the case for workers' sanctions.

● Support the lobby of the TUC sponsored by Birmingham and Lambeth Trades Councils. The rank and file will act if the TUC won't. Make conference pledges to the ANC and Sactu real. No more TUC hot air. General strike to force Thatcher's hand. For working class supervised comprehensive sanctions against apartheid.

TUC lobby, 8.30am Monday September 1. Train from Victoria leaves 6.30am. £4 return tickets can be booked by contacting Bronwen Handyside, Lambeth Nalگو, 17 Pordon Rd, London SW2. Tel: 01-274 7722 x 2001/2010



Movement for Socialist Renewal

THE SO-CALLED Movement for Socialist Renewal has excited much comment. *The Guardian* informed its readers that its manifesto was given to it by people it says come from the highest echelons of Soviet society.

Of course, in the name of defending the USSR, centrism has flatly dismissed the document as a CIA forgery. Therefore for them nothing more need be said. But from a trend which rejoiced every time Stalin announced the unmasking of a new nest of fascist spies amongst Lenin's Old Bolsheviks and still today refuses to admit the Soviet comrades can be anything other than right, such a claim counts for nought. Its supporters are patently not interested in the truth.

We have no way of being absolutely definite as to whether or not the MSR manifesto is of CIA origin. Only those working with the CIA can know this. When our US brothers and sisters make their revolution and open up the files in the CIA's Langley Virginia HQ, we will be able to study all the counterrevolutionary plots, black propaganda and dirty tricks devised by its agents. Then we can pronounce on the CIA and the MSR with certainty.

In the meantime can Soviet declarations on the MSR manifesto be trusted? Well firstly, while imperialism has a long record of producing forgeries they often carry weight simply because of the closed, restrictive and secretive atmosphere in the USSR. And secondly, we all know the Soviet authorities respond to almost all unwanted criticisms by making reference to CIA agents.

So getting into the, it is, no it isn't, game, is a pretty fruitless exercise. True, the MSR manifesto contains certain elementary 'facts', which are it seems unfactual. This should put us on our guard. It would tend to cast doubt on its claim to come from top Soviet officials and also, it must be said, the counter-claim that it is of CIA origin.

But whatever, and whoever, its authors are, it cannot be denied that some of the problems the manifesto points to are real enough. Widespread corruption, drunkenness and social apathy have been admitted, even before Gorbachev became General Secretary. So has, though less candidly, the USSR's backwardness compared with the advanced capitalist countries. The MSR says labour productivity in the USSR is only 55% of that in the USA and only 25% in agriculture. The USSR might not be in danger of becoming a 'Third World' country, as the MSR warns, but the gap between it and the USA shows no sign of dramatically closing.

This poses the crucial question of how best to defend the USSR against the danger of war and counterrevolution the gap exposes it to.

The MSR, as well as calling for sweeping democratic reforms, stands for a retreat in the direction of capitalism. Ironically the Trotskyites acclaimed the MSR manifesto despite its call for a return to the methods of the NEP, which according to Trotsky himself, were a fetter on development even in the latter half of the 1920s. This graphically illustrates the bankruptcy of his followers and the falsity of their claims to defend the Soviet Union.

In the context of the epoch we live in, the worldwide transition from capitalism to communism, the Soviet Union's salvation does not lie with market socialism or other measures strengthening the forces of capitalism within socialism. It must look to communism. Today any real move in this direction demands a full flowering of socialist democracy. This will break down the existing social barriers to the dramatic increase in labour productivity socialism promises by making planning really effective.

We Leninists say the best conditions for this to happen in are those which see the further development of the world revolution. Isolation of the world revolution in the USSR meant its economic backwardness, inherited from Tsarism, atavistically caused its socialism to suffer a "bureaucratic deformation" (Lenin). In other words overcoming the USSR's problems must go hand in hand with the fight to complete the world revolution so brilliantly begun in October 1917.

The Editor

Six months subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £5; Europe £8; Rest of World £10 (airmail £17.50).

Annual subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £10. Institutions £20; Europe £16. Institutions £26; Rest of World £20 (airmail £35). Institutions £30 (airmail £45).

Back copies: Issues 1-6 (theoretical journal) £1 each plus 25p p&p. Issues of paper (from issue 7) 30p each plus 10p p&p.

All cheques payable to November Publications Ltd.

Correspondence to: The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX

Printed by: Morning Litho Printers Ltd. (TU), Unit 5 St. Marks Industrial Est., 439 North Woolwich Road, London E16 2BS.

Published by: November Publications, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX © World copyright August 1986

LETTERS

Workers sanctions

As I am a telephonist with British Telecom International, I am directly concerned with *The Leninist's* call for workers' sanctions.

If telephonists could be persuaded to refuse connections with South Africa, this would result in those calls being dialled direct, and the only way they can be disrupted is by sabotage by telephone engineers.

Both the UCW and the NCU grades are currently facing compulsory redundancy in the very near future, yet I cannot even persuade the most active union supporters to take the most limited action now in support of their own jobs.

As you know, the NCU were badly defeated in their struggle against privatisation and voted recently not to take industrial action in defence of pay and jobs.

I am pointing this out to demonstrate that it is not simply a case of British Telecom workers en masse cutting off the lines.

Some telephonists, maybe even the majority would be happy not to connect calls, but this would amount to a tiny percentage of South African traffic being affected, and could only be a symbolic gesture.

An act of sabotage could be committed by one individual very effectively, but of course would have to be repeated every time repairs were effected (which could be done if necessary by a manager).

Therefore, the possibility of effective, long-term action by BT workers to cut off South African lines must realistically be assessed as just about zero, especially in the current atmosphere.

Yours in comradeship,
Reg Mikes
East London

Slippery slope

I have read *The Leninist* for many months and found general agreement with your policies, particularly that on South Africa, i.e. workers' sanctions through councils of action etc, as in the Hands Off Russia Campaign in the 1920s. Then I read your issue: "Strike against Apartheid". What a contrast of policies — I thought I was reading a centrist Trot article, revolutionary verbiage with reformist actions.

The whole thread of the argument in the article is on the one hand, pressurising the Thatcher government to implement sanctions, the task of workers being relegated to "ensure that the government and big business do not and cannot give succour to the apartheid regime in its hour of need." What naive nonsense! And what a shock to read such rubbish in *The Leninist*! What has happened to the independent working class action, the councils of action, the Leninist strategy of generating CLASS ACTION by the British workers to assist directly the CLASS ACTION of the South African workers? Are you now echoing the Trot line that these methods are not practicable? That the workers are not ready for such action? That we have called and there is no answer from the workers? Are you already fainthearted and disappointed with the workers' failure to heed your revolutionary call? Therefore do we blame the workers, forsake the true revolutionary perspective, the only effective Leninist CLASS ACTION POLICY, for the sake of reformist practical steps; for opportunist expediency? That downward slippery slope to reformism?

As a PS I would add that I agree 100% with the concept you advocate of "uninterrupted" advance to socialism — but reading the SACP

policy documents one must be honest and seriously doubt their allegiance to this Leninist perspective.

Alan Jarvis
East London

PPPS reversal

You have invited comments on *The Leninist* which I have bought regularly since the first issue and mine would be that whereas I found it for a long time stimulating, particularly for its exposure of the rotten politics of *Straight Left*, I read it nowadays mainly for its news of the internal situation in our Party.

One reason for my diminished enthusiasm for *The Leninist* is that the longer I have followed the development of *Iscinini Sesi* the less I have admired it.

The reversal of policy towards the PPPS Management Committee last year has never been satisfactorily justified in *The Leninist*. If you say that it was only last May that you realised what they were trying to do and so withdrew your critical support then you show yourselves to have been naive and wrong in that previous support. No genuine self-criticism for such a mistake has appeared in *The Leninist*.

Still, if there is one enduring virtue in your coverage it is your articles on Afghanistan and Amin. Nowhere else do I see articles which are not simply pro — or anti — Soviet but actually bother to look at the Afghan revolution in its own right, not just as an opportunity to relive the Czechoslovakia debate.

Yours fraternally,
D.B. Jones
Cambridge

Reply to PPPS reversal

David Sheriff replies
Well comrade Jones a stimulated, and regular reader you may have been but communism necessitates the unity of theory and practice. This we have had no evidence of from you.

The Leninist and *Iscinini Sesi* are two totally separate organisations, if you have an argument with our 'pro-leadership' position criticise us not them. But then you are, it must be said talking out of your backside.

1. We published a 9,000 word supplement detailing the internal debates amongst supporters of *The Leninist* over what attitude to take over the Chaterite rebellion (July 1985). We also published a supplement fully explaining our position. Not May 1986 but August 1985! (Have you really read our press regularly — there does seem to be holes in your knowledge amounting to ignorance).

2. We never, ever, gave Chater "critical support". We always attacked his and his friend's politics as liquidationist. We did criticise our slowness in realising Chater was taking the *Morning Star* rebellion outside the Party.

Scotland Again

There seems a danger of comrade Donaldson and myself dominating your letters columns. Is the national question the only controversy to excite your readers?

As you point out he and I are defending somewhat different positions. I agree with you that Scotland is not an oppressed nation, far less a nation oppressed by imperialism. Anti-imperialism is not an important ideology here, and I agree with your general hostility to nationalism and separatism. My argument is that the uneven development of class contradictions in Britain is likely to lead to a political crisis over the constitutional position of Scotland. This crisis, by undermining the legitimacy of the British state within

Scotland could create the opportunity for communists to instigate openly revolutionary forms of struggle here, well before a revolutionary crisis comes over the horizon in Britain as a whole.

Bitter experience has taught us that revolutionary crises occur much more rarely in capitalist democracies than we had hoped some seventy years ago. For us to ignore one of the rare occasions when one might arise would be irresponsible.

Finally I want to correct a factual point in Jack's last contribution to the debate. He says that "despite all the efforts of British political parties to make the Irish good Britons they insist on voting for Irish political parties; Sinn Fein, the SDLP, the DUP and the Official Unionists, even the Alliance, (all existing and fighting around the border and the living national question in Ireland.)"

The voters of Northern Ireland have had little choice in the matter. The main British political parties refuse to accept members in Northern Ireland, refuse to set up branches there and refuse to put up candidates there. The voters are thus faced with an electoral slate made up entirely of regional parties with the exception of Sinn Fein which is an Irish party. Even this has its electoral base in NI and is something of a fringe group in Eire. Denied the elementary right to vote on class lines for a party that could form the government of the state they live in, is it any wonder that politics there is dominated by the border?

The main demand of the non-sectarian Campaign For Equal Citizenship is that residents of Northern Ireland should be given the same democratic rights as other British citizens, including the right to participate in the choice of government.
WP Cockshott
Scotland

Jack Conrad replies:

Of course there is uneven development of the class struggle in Britain. In relationship to this we pay tribute to the militancy of workers in Scotland in the past and also the present. But English and Welsh workers have made their contribution as well. Remember the Jolly George, the Little Moscow's in South Wales, Cable Street and the Pentonville 5? What about the miners' Great Strike? Scottish miners were surely equalled in fighting grit by the lads in South Wales, Yorkshire, Durham and Kent. This should be a cause for celebration not left nationalist despair. It is not the prime task of communists to create nation states let alone to hatch Machiavellian plots to divert Scottish workers into nationalism. As we have said time and time again wanting devolution is not the same as wanting separation. Communists in Scotland should fight nationalism not objectively join with it. We are not being pedantic. The majority of Scots did not vote Labour in the last elections. The majority who voted, (65%?) voted Labour, and then as you say only just. Finally you should be asking why the main British establishment parties do not organise in the Six Counties not demanding that they do.

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed names and addresses, and certain details.



WRITE TO:
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No CIA agent —



Comrade Hafizullah Amin

its official

THE JULY 16 public meeting of the Harrow *Morning Star* Readers and Supporters Group listened with rapt attention to Mohammed Arif, the Secretary of the Afghanistan Friendship Society. Understandably particular interest was paid to his statement on Hafizullah Amin. "In my view" he said "Amin was not a CIA agent" ... centrist mouths dropped open in disbelief.

Leninist comrades present at the meeting naturally welcomed this and expressed their hope that this was indicative of a shift in the official position of the new leadership of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. Amin, our comrades said, and the other 97 other PDPA leaders killed at the same time, have been done a grave historical injustice. *The Leninist*, they pointed out, had always insisted that unless proof can be given that these comrades were CIA agents such accusations should be withdrawn.

We have, as our readers will know, been attacked time and time again for this. Yet what sort of CIA agents carry out a revolution? For the simple fact is that it was under the effective leadership of Amin that *Khalq* cells organised and carried out the April 1978 revolution which overthrew Daoud and the feudal/bureaucratic regime. Indeed we have long maintained that this revolution was only possible because Amin never trusted the opportunists around Barbrack Karmal (see *The Leninist* No.2 Spring 1982).

The PDPA founded in January 1965, split down the middle in June 1967. Although petty bourgeois types do their best to obscure the nature of the split, chauvinistically dismissing it with condescending references to personalities and tribal origin, the split was based on the attitude towards the existing state. Should it be overthrown or should it be reformed? The *Khalq* wing, which included Amin and the Party's General Secretary, Nur Muhammad Tarakki, argued for revolution, Karmal and the *Parcham* wing for reform.

Khalq and *Parcham* reunited in July 1977, after two years of difficult negotiations. Despite this, Amin insisted the *Khalq* cells in the army,

which he had been responsible for establishing, be kept separate although there was a 50:50 division of seats on the united Central Committee.

Because of this Amin's work in the army was not disrupted. Thus when the revolutionary situation came to a head in 1978 the forces of revolution were prepared. In response to the Daoud regime's attempt to crush the PDPA, through assassinating some leaders and arresting other like Tarakki, Karmal and Amin, the *Khalq* cells in the army immediately set in motion the plans Amin had drawn up for a nationwide uprising.

The revolution succeeded, and a PDPA dominated government began the task of transforming society. The old state machine was decapitated and replaced by what was in essence a form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Of course Afghanistan was an extremely backward country. This meant that the order of the day was not directly socialist but democratic tasks. The far reaching land reform, the literacy campaign and the outlawing of the selling of women were seen as the first steps of a revolution which would in due course go uninterruptedly to socialism.

Inevitably the democratic reforms outraged the tribal leaders who were great landowners. They whipped up the countryside with dark tales of atheistic communists, rule by women and the dangers of the youth being corrupted by alien ideas.

Barbrack Karmal and his *Parcham* friends had actually opposed the revolution wanting to support "Daoud and the 'left's' around him" (*The New Worker* January 11 1981). They had to be persuaded to take seats in the new government and were always demanding that the democratic reforms be slowed down or halted.

It was therefore almost inevitable that as the feudal Holy War against the new government gathered momentum they would call for retreat and an alliance with the 'progressive' wing of counter-revolution. No wonder Karmal and

the four *Parcham* ministers were soon relieved of their posts, quietly sent abroad and later removed from the Central Committee.

The growth of counterrevolution in Afghanistan worried the Soviet leaders. They knew nothing of the PDPA plans to make revolution in 1978.

They would have preferred to deal with Daoud, whom they had long dealings, than risk a revolution which in the event of failure could see a hostile regime come to power on its southern boarder. Failing to understand their own revolutionary history they appear to have thought the PDPA's leaders and their sweeping reforms were the problem not the counterrevolution. Because of this they used every device to get the *Parcham* opportunists back into office, urged a deal with the reactionaries and argued for the ousting of Amin.

It was this pressure which apparently lay behind Tarakki and Amin violently falling out in September 1979. Amin's taking over as PDPA General Secretary meant there was no fundamental change in the course of the revolution. In the eyes of the Soviet leadership this could only fuel the passion of the counterrevolutionaries (for whom Amin personified the hated reforms and the feared red terror).

It is well known that both Tarakki and Amin had made repeated requests for Soviet fraternal assistance. But when at last it came, it tragically saw the installation of Karmal and the killing of Amin and 97 other PDPA leaders. Far from stemming the tide of counterrevolution this gave it a new lease of life. Karmal, they could say, was a puppet of the Soviet Union and the war against the PDPA government could be presented as a war against the foreigner. Descriptions of Amin as a "satanic operative and tyrant" did not and could not placate the counterrevolutionaries and accusations that he was a "CIA agent" could only embitter the majority of PDPA members who supported *Khalq*.

True to their diplomatic internationalism centrists in Britain and elsewhere repeated the foul slanders against Amin with all the conviction of political virgins. Because of this the statement of Mohammed Arif could only but be acutely embarrassing to the *Morning Star* supporters at the Harrow meeting. After all only the day before they were blockheadedly repeating the slanders against Amin verbatim from such publications as the Soviet pamphlet *The Truth About Afghanistan*.

At the meeting Tom Durkin attempting to cover the tracks of the centrists with the anti-proletarian internationalist argument that it is not the job of communists to use their brains and offer fraternal criticism, as Lenin did. According to Tom our job is simply to organise "solidarity".

Of course, Leninists unconditionally defend the Afghan revolution and support Soviet assistance against counterrevolutionaries: but does that mean suspending our critical faculties? Certainly not. We, unlike the NCP, the Straight Leftists and Uncle Tom Durkin and all centrists, will not be an uncritical cheerleader of comrade Tarakki, ... then comrade ... er ... Amin, then ... er, um ... Karmal (who been shuffled into the background) and now ... comrade Najibullah ... only to slander them the next day.

We call on the Afghan Party and all communists to openly acknowledge that Amin and the 97 PDPA leaders have been the victims of slander. Their names should be cleared and those responsible for ordering their deaths exposed.

July's Communist, the Straight Leftist's left face, reports that the national appeals committee of the CPGB has decided to overturn the decision of the Northern District Committee to expel comrade John Corcoran. Instructions have been sent to the DC to restore him to full membership and apologise for the disciplinary action taken against him. This is a political humiliation for the Euro leadership of the District — imposed after a St. John Street purge of the Straight Leftists, not least comrade Brian Topping who was the District Secretary. Comrade Corcoran had been expelled for selling *Straight Left* at a AAM demonstration. The witness to the 'crime' has since publicly admitted to defrauding the DC of over £1,000. Of course in the case of this Euro fingerman no action was taken by the DC because he is a "loyal" Party member, who is "experiencing psychological difficulties" due to alcohol. Perhaps instead of seeing pink elephants he was plagued with sellers of the pink *Straight Left*?

The Leninist was well received by the crowds at the recent Durham Miners' Gala: over 200 papers were snapped up, thousands of leaflets on South Africa and the Class War Prisoners were given out and our stall did a brisk trade in revolutionary literature. There was a lively discussion at the public meeting *The Leninist* organised during the day in Durham city itself on the need for launching a mass, militant campaign for the Class War Prisoners including the jailed miners of the 1984-85 Great Strike. Compared to us other sections of our Communist Party seemed to be very inactive during the day. Leninist comrades hardly encountered a single *7 Days* or *Morning Star* seller. Also it seemed as though *The Leninist* was the only section of the left in general, let alone of the Communist Party, who were raising the issue of the jailed miners in a serious way. In particular, we would ask supporters of Straight Leftism (who boast of their influence in the Northern District) where was your presence on the day, where was your political intervention? The more we operate in the workers' movement, the more we become convinced that the task of reforging our Party falls to *The Leninist*.

The new General Secretary of our Young Communist League (yes it still exists — just) is comrade Simon Warren. 'Bunny', as friend and foe alike call him, has a tough job on his hands. In London, one of the few remaining district organisations, informants tell us, there are only just over 70 card carrying members left. Yet the Party's EC put off its discussion on the YCL, planned for July to November. True it has issued a call for help to be given to the YCL. But this has been done time and time again. Is the EC hoping that the Euro YCL leadership will continue with the 'anti-authoritarian' style of work (like banning *The Leninist*) that has seen membership decline some 97% over the two decades they have dominated it? Surely not. But if they do it would relieve them of having to spend money on it wouldn't it? Send resolutions to the EC demanding emergency action to save the YCL, and if you're under 25 join it and fight for the sort of revolutionary politics young workers really need.



Theory and practice need money

Leninists are active in the fight for Irish freedom, they are tireless in their support of the sacked and jailed miners and in the forefront of the struggle for workers' direct solidarity with the revolution in South Africa. They know that our political work, not least our paper, is only possible with a serious, revolutionary, approach to finance. This can best be seen with our Summer Offensive. It is now drawing to a triumphant end. A number of comrades have upped their pledges to well over three weeks income and even more pleasing the number participating is nearly three times greater than last year. Unfortunately our readers have only fitfully responded to our £600 monthly fighting fund, £94 down in July and £202 down in August. Of course as we took a summer break in August this was not disastrous. Nonetheless the shortfall must be made up. We need more and bigger regular donations and we need them now.

FROM 'PUSH AND SHOVE' TO THE GREAT STRIKE

ON JULY 2 Sir Kenneth Newman announced to the world that he and the rest of the lads at the Met were acquiring some new equipment. Twenty four bullet proof vehicles, eighty armoured personnel carriers and 1500 long truncheons. This, from the ruling class' angle is a necessity rather than a luxury.

As the economy moves steadily towards crisis the social symptoms become ever more exacerbated. The bosses can part with progressively less and less of total production in the form of wages, housing and suchlike and must instead plough it directly back into production to maintain what is for them an acceptable mass of profit.

The economic decline of British, indeed world capitalism is producing an ever stronger polarisation between the conditions of the masses and the conditions of the bourgeoisie. Alongside this process, a direct product of it, is the decay in the social order as the working class resists, and because it can no longer afford this the state is forced to steam in in an ever more brutal fashion.

As a result the working class is beginning to rediscover more militant forms of class action than the traditional jolly-jolly push'n'shove picket-line tactics with the police and a naive reliance on TUC tea and sandwiches at Number 10 of the post-war period. Direct action such as the miners' hit squads coupled with the uprisings in the inner-cities herald the course of future struggles, dictated by the naked terror the state in Britain's increasingly crisis ridden economy will have to use to maintain the status quo.

Now we are not ones to say 'we told you so', but nevertheless we did; back in issue number one in 1981. With the miners' Great Strike and the summer 1985 uprisings there can be little doubt of the correctness of predictions of escalating violence, from both sides of the class divide.

The bourgeoisie, having the might of the state, have done it better though. Police militarisation has been noticeably increasing since they ended up with a considerable amount of egg over their faces at Saltley Gates in 1972, and especially since the uprisings of 1981 where police had their riot shields shattered by bricks and frequently ended up cowering behind bin lids.

They have responded to these new conditions with disconcerting swiftness. As stated above, the good old British bobby is beginning to take on the likeness of a medieval knight, plus CS gas, plastic bullets, 'riot buggies', and fire arms which as Cherry Groce and John Shorthouse learnt to their cost, they will not hesitate to use.

The Met's head thug Sir Kenneth Newman, has stated on numerous occasions that he doesn't mind at all breaking out his armoury in the interests of 'law and order'. In fact you can almost sense 'Blue Ken' and his underlings salivate at the very thought. Alongside the new hardware is a new force of 'territorial support groups' which is supposed to form a half-way house between a riot squad and the 'regulars'.

Should the situation become "volatile and violent" *The Guardian* of July 7 assures us, the police will respond "robustly". Interesting turn of phrase, don't you think? The number of situations in which the police may respond in such a robust fashion are also being extended. PC Plodd has come a long way from Saltley Gates. Dixon of Dock Green is dead and buried.

BRITISH IMPERIALISM'S TRAINING GROUND FOR BRIXTON AND ORGREAVE

The methods of being implemented by the British police have not been drawn fully fledged out of a hat; they all, from road blocks to riot shields have a common origin, Ireland. Miners during the Great Strike came to realise this by relating their own experiences of state brutality to what they had seen so often reported in the press in the Six Counties before the strike.

One book to be produced as a result of the Great Strike, *State of Siege*, asserted that "a National Riot Force has been developed and deployed in England. This force is trained in para-military strategies and is equipped with riot weapons. The lessons which this force is putting into practice are those learnt in the north of Ireland since 1968." (p.56) Police sieges of pit villages such as Fitzwilliam and Armthorp could just as easily transposed to a republican community in the Six Counties.

The state had not gone into the strike in an ad hoc fashion; in October 1982 Newman, ex-Chief Constable of the RUC became Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police. In the same year Brigadier Mike Harvey started at the Met, teaching 'arrest and restraint' techniques he had practised with the British army in — guess where? — the Six Counties. CS gas, first used in Britain in Toxteth in 1981, and plastic bullets, produced at Broadwater Farm in 1985, had already seen service for over a decade in Ireland. As soon as water cannon can be made 'manoeuvrable' enough we can be assured of seeing them in service here too.

Along with this has come the greater use of road blocks, especially during the Great Strike, greater frequency and violence of street and house searches and many other techniques so obviously taken from Britain's security forces in Ireland.

One of the most striking parallels between the struggles in Ireland and Britain has been the British states response of 'criminalisation'. Miners and black youth, like IRA Volunteers, are branded as mindless thugs, psychopaths and social misfits for responding to the force of the state with their own. The state is portrayed as a neutral body protecting Joe Public from the anarchy that would prevail should these 'nutters' have their way. From the point of view of the bourgeoisie this is an extremely successful approach; the response of the masses is to treat the state as 'theirs', with this view extending through to the very core of our CPGB, in one form or another.

Who now can doubt the truth in Marx's maxim, that "a nation that oppresses another can never itself be free"? The Six Counties have for too long been the training ground in repression for British imperialism, and British workers, for so long apathetic to this are beginning to feel the sharp end of it.

Therefore the call for them to respond not only to *their* repression, but crucially the oppression of the Irish people will gain potential to weld these workers into a mighty social force to demand the closure of Britain's training ground, to fight to get troops out of Ireland, and out now. This struggle for British workers to realise themselves as a class and, what is more, an *internationalist* class will herald the turning of the tide against the state's boot boys in blue.

THE LEFT ON THE MARCH: RIGHT, RIGHT, RIGHT...

Primarily we must look to the communist movement in Britain; Eurocommunist, Communist Campaign Group and the Straight Leftists. We expected little, and indeed these comrades have lived up to our expectations famously. No-one could be still fool enough to expect these oh-so British communists to hold to their internationalist duty to the Irish people. We have exposed this many times elsewhere (although they expose themselves without our help) and so will not go into it here. But they have even failed to come up with anything to aid the British proletariat in their fight against the state forces.

Moving from right to left, and so starting with the Euros. Oh lord! Where do you begin? There is more than enough of their own revisionist mud to sling at them. For example, in the Great Strike voices amongst the more rabid Euro-Lemmes were heard wailing that violence should be put down to male hormones and patriarchal society. Neither capitalist state nor workers' power, but international sisterhood! To be fair though, this never *quite* became a Party position. However, towards the end of the strike when agro did occur on the picket lines our Euros felt confident to slap the wrists of all concerned; "there should have been an early condemnation of violence from whichever quarter it came," (*Marxism Today*, March

TOOL



UP

The left stands against police terror at Orgreave, B instead of fighting for workers to equip themselves wi police away from our picket lines, estates and demo pleads for accountability and sensitivity.

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1985). Not for the Euros all this macho picket line stuff.

What all this pacifism from these worshippers of bourgeois legality amounts to is a de facto defence of the bourgeois state. This was best illustrated by the Young Communist League's Euro-dominated General Council "expressing its condolences" with the widow of scab taxi driver David Wilkie. Needless to say, no condolences were expressed for those miners who died fighting for their jobs, not a word was said in support of those jailed in the course of the strike. For them the YCL only had a contemptuous silence.

The Straight Leftists samizdat *Communist* of December 1984 echoed the Euros when it wailed that "the death of the Welsh taxi driver is to be regretted." Not by us, comrades.

In the face of such crass opportunism, many CPGB members have sought refuge in the politics of the *Morning Star*, and its supporting Communist Campaign Group. But is this really any better, as some of its apologists claim, a lesser of the two evils? We would contend — and the facts bear us out — that this is not the case. All the way through the Great Strike the *Star* kept a diplomatic silence on the question of violence, merely pointing a finger at the police as the sole culprits, portraying the miners liberalistically, as bemused victims.

Until of course Dean Hanncock and Russell Shankland killed Wilkie; the *Star* then condemned them. Like the Euros the *Star* has failed to do anything for the jailed lads; an article in July 16 *Star*, with a photo of Paul Whetton holding a poster calling for the release and reinstatement of all *sacked* and *jailed* miners was headed with the title "justice demanded for *sacked* (note the omission) miners". Throughout the article the jailed lads are not mentioned. By its acquiescence to Kinnock on the question of those jailed for their workers' violence, the *Morning Star* makes itself indistinguishable from the Euros, who were at least more honest in their condemnation. On this question the 'harder-than-thou' Straight Leftists are little different.

EUROCOMMUNISM LIVES UP TO ITS RIGHTIST REPUTATION

The illusions of all these shades of CPGB opportunists were even more clearly expressed in their response to the uprisings in the inner cities and other subsequent events. 7 Days of July 12 puts the summer uprisings down to "blinker stereotypes that pervade police thinking", and adds this to arch Euro Dave Cook's hopelessly reactionary call "for fewer pandas prowling and for more home beat policing." (Dave Cook, *Black and Blue*, p28, CPGB pamphlet) Dave also called for "a proper anti-drugs drive" after Handsworth.

If comrade Cook would care to write in with his address and planet of origin (it certainly ain't this one) I shall be only too delighted to reply in person to his contributions to contemporary Marxism; I don't think the editor would allow me to express such views here.

The *Morning Star* comes out with essentially the same line, that of 'police' accountability, praising the recent Gifford Report in the same way as it did with the (what it called 'valuable') Scarman Report. The *Star* of July 8 proclaimed that "Newman got it wrong"; from whose point of view? It goes on to point the finger at "this government's disastrous policies (sic) aimed at boosting unemployment, racism, poor housing and the whole gamut of grievances which combine to put the inner-city in crisis". So all we need is a change of 'policies'. What reformist crap! These ideas are not new, Marx had to defeat them some time ago:

"Where political parties exist, each party sees the root of every evil in the fact that instead of itself an opposing party stands at the *helm of the state*. Even radical and revolutionary politicians seek the root of the evil not in the *essential nature of the state*, but in a definite *state form*, which they wish to replace with a *different state form*." (Marx and Engels, *CW*, Vol 3, p197)

Is this not what the *Morning Star* believes? Except ourselves, all factions of our CPGB hold to community policing of some sort: "This Congress ... calls for policing to be brought under democratic control and be at the service of the community." (*Law, Order and*

Policing, Resolution, CPGB 38th Congress)

Lenin had this to say of the *British Roaders* of his own day: "Pure democracy" is the mendacious phrase of the liberal who wants to fool the workers." (*The Proletarian Revolution and the Renegade Kautsky*) Today's renegades, be they Euro, Straight Leftist or CCG, all stand to the right of the one Lenin had to deal with in Kautsky. Nonetheless, they shall find us no easier going for it. Quite the reverse.

What then of the revolutionary groupings outside our Party, who owe their existence to its inability to provide a fighting strategy for our class. Are things less bleak here? For the sake of brevity I shall deal with their general attitudes to state/workers' violence to give a more rounded overview of their attitudes to workers' defence, and by implication also to the state.

Militant, as might be expected, are the worst, and join in with the Euros in their 'anti-drugs drive' kick. As well as setting black youth up for more police persecution they were also unable to offer any perspectives for workers' defence during the Great Strike or in subsequent disputes such as Wapping. Instead they just winge that their 'workers in uniform' are not doing right by their 'class brothers'.

The best that the virulently anti-Soviet *Socialist Organiser* could come up with was their paper of September 9 1985 to cry "Off the fence, Kinnock". Unfortunately for these Labourite dreamers Kinnock, as leader of the thoroughly bourgeois Labour Party, had come of the fence long ago (if he was ever on it) to stand with the racist police and the rest of the racist state in their attacks on black youth during the summer uprisings. In fact, doing just as he had done through the Great Strike. And even had he wagged a disapproving finger at Newman how would that have helped those fighting on Broadwater Farm? Some people never learn, do they?

Socialist Action, in a similar vein, demanded that "Labour must defend black youth." We look forward to their "the moon must be made of green cheese" slogan. And for heavens sake, why not? The former is about as likely as the latter. What these calls do in effect is to tie all defence action to the dead weight of the Labour Party. Those in struggle, be they miners or black youth, need action *now*, not if and when this bourgeois party sees fit.

On a somewhat more whimsical level, *Workers Power's* response to the uprisings was to call for "the Trade Unions, local Labour Parties and LPYS etc." to form "Martial Arts clubs" (November '85). Well fair enough, but if it comes to "Enter the Dragon" versus "Enter the Special Patrol Group" I know who my money's going on. They also call for "active Labour movement support for black self defence" (Oct '85), but don't clarify what they mean by this.

Alex Callinicos and Mike Simons of the Socialist Workers Party, in their book *The Great Strike* attacked any viable working class response to police repression:

"The only argument against attacks on individual scabs was that they were not a way to win the strike. They were not a substitute for mass picketing... they weren't a substitute for real solidarity." (p194) Notice the sleight of hand? Because the hit squads were not going to win the strike *by themselves*, they could not be used *at all*. The SWP also opposes the CPGB's successfully organised Workers' Defence Corps in the 1926 General Strike, because (this will make you laugh) they "were designed to prevent clashes with the police and keep picketing under disciplined bureaucratic control." (*Socialist Worker Review*)

The SWP longs for the good old days of Saltley Gates, but what it does not realise, thanks to its oddball economic formulations which allow it to label the USSR as 'state capitalist' and its crass economism, that such solutions just will not work now, because capitalism cannot afford to let them. All it can afford to do is *crush*, and it has had another fourteen years of the war in Ireland to train in. If the SWP has learnt nothing since 1972, then the bourgeoisie most certainly has.

It is strange that whilst all these organisations are Trotskyite, with the exception of the erstwhile Trotskyite Tony Cliff's SWP, that they should cling to, and extend Trotsky's mistakes, but reject aspects of his old Bolshevism that he carried with him to the Fourth International:

"In connection with every strike and street demonstration, it is imperative to propagate the idea of creating *workers' groups for self defence*. " ... It is necessary to advance the slogan of a *workers' militia* as the one serious guarantee for the inviolability of workers'

organisations, meetings and press ... *The arming of the proletariat* is an imperative concomitant element to its struggle for liberation." (All quotes from *The Transitional Programme*)

Groups that do take a healthier line on workers' defence, such as the Spartacist League and the Revolutionary Communist Party, do so either in very dry, abstract terms or through substitutionism. Whilst both these organisations defended miners' violence during the year long strike, they were unable to see the potential of the hit squads as forming the nucleus for Workers' Defence Corps, the Sparts calling instead for 'Trade Union defence guards'. Marxism should enable us to understand reality, and through that understanding change it. It does not pre-ordain that reality. It is not a set of formulas; the theory must be related to practice, in this case the practice of the hit squads.

All credit to the RCP. Its Workers' Against Racism roam the streets, on the lookout for racists and media publicity. But because of their rejection of any joint or United Front work, WAR is restricted more or less to RCP members and supporters, and was set up purely with the aim of promoting the growth of the RCPs, unlike the United Front organisations of the early CPGB. Good wishes and token stunts do not a workers' militia make.

FORWARD TO WORKING CLASS LAW AND WORKING CLASS ORDER

So after bad-mouthing everyone in sight, what solutions has *The Leninist* got? You would be right in thinking that droves of AK47-toting Leninist supporters are not yet barrackading off the end of your road in preparation for the final confrontation with the bourgeoisie.

As a small group of revolutionary communists our strength lies, as yet, solely in our theory. We not only take what is most advanced in our world workers' movement today but also look back to Lenin, and the lessons learnt through the practice of the Bolsheviks and crystallised in the early Communist International.

One aspect of this, workers' defence, that we would cling to as our own is that to "arm the people with a sense of burning necessity to arm is the constant, common duty of the Social Democrats [Communists] always and everywhere, and it can be applied equally to Japan as it can to England, to Germany as it can to Italy. Wherever there are oppressed classes struggling against exploitation, the doctrine of the socialist, from the very start, and in the first place, arms them with a burning necessity to arm, and this 'necessity' is present when the labour movement first begins. Social Democracy has only to make this burning necessity a conscious one, to bring home to those who are conscious of the need for organisation and planned action, the need for considering the whole political situation" (VI Lenin, *CW*, Vol 9, p432)

Lenin is all very well locked between green book covers and selectively mis-quoted over a pint occasionally, isn't he comrades? But as can be seen from the above quotation, the practice is a little more harsh. Nonetheless, it was practice which our early CPGB was prepared to hold to. One occasion was the organisation of workers' defence in Methil, Fife in 1926, where workers were organised under communist leadership after vicious police attacks on their pickets and meetings: "There was no more police interference because the Defence Corps was organised and paraded in the streets in columns of four under commanders — ex-service NCO's. A great sight and not without preparations to 'repel borders' ". (contemporary letter, cited in *The Leninist*, May 1985)

That tradition has been deliberately lost and needs to be rediscovered alongside other revolutionary traditions of our Communist Party, now more urgently than ever. We have related these politics to the struggles of today, whether in Orgreave or Tottenham. There is no other 'peaceful road' or 'short cut' against today's attacks by the state. As the situation worsens, and it surely will, those with such illusions will lose them or be swept aside.

Certainly our battle of ideas today will be followed sooner or later by greater battles on the streets.

Alan Merrik



Psychiatrists in the USA are being asked to help get people executed. Alan Ford for example, was sentenced to death several years ago, but the terror of a prolonged wait on Death Row resulted in his complete mental breakdown. Ford's execution has therefore been postponed because he is mentally incapable of understanding the nature of the fate that is to befall him — a general stipulation of the US court before judicial murder can proceed. Psychiatrists are therefore being told to restore Alan Ford to sanity, in order that a new execution date can be set! So the next time someone starts complaining to you about the abuse of psychiatric medicine in the USSR...

The odd Trot sect, the Spartacist League's distinctive line on South Africa seems to consist of running around telling people that we cannot fight for workers' sanctions, as this will lead the poor dumb blacks over there (who are actually being silly enough to demand them!) to suffering terribly so. Again. The Leninist pinpoints the key question that thrusts itself forward from this: does the Spartacist League have Margaret Thatcher's line or does Thatcher have the Sparis?

It "provides for seizure of union assets... bans any building labourer who has been a financial member of the union in the previous twelve months... requires anyone seeking work as a building worker to swear a statutory declaration that he or she is not a member of the proscribed union. This is to be supervised by police on building sites". Extract from proposed new Tory anti-union legislation? No. It is part of the 'BLF Deregistration Act' enacted by the Labour government in the Australian state of Victoria, part of its attempt to crush the Building Labourers Federation. Hands up those who think Neil (scab) Kinnock will be any different?

Those in our movement who think Lenin's theory of imperialism is outdated, who talk of British imperialism being a thing of the past might like to think again. Britain's industrial base is moribund according to the Daily Telegraph (July 29 1986). But there is no need for monopoly capital to panic. North Sea oil "has allowed us(?) to build up a portfolio overseas which is worth £250 billion". The Telegraph says "Those foreigners are working to keep us in the style to which we are accustomed."

MINERS

Some miners are demoralised. Despairing of the NUM leadership many are taking voluntary redundancy. How to rekindle the fighting spirit, how to unite the isolated cases of miners fighting back? Left reformism with its narrow economism has had its day. Now's the time to fightback in a different way.

MINERS: FIGHT IN NEW WAY

HARD AS IT may be to believe, you can still meet some in the workers' movement who will insist that the miners' Great Strike of 1984-85 was not defeated. Even when the NUM is offered a humiliating pay increase on a take it or leave it basis; when something like 40,000 men have left the industry since the end of the strike; as the closure programme continues unabated and over 500 men stay sacked or imprisoned you will still stumble across willfully stupid people who claim that the miners in fact won the strike.

Militants in the pits could be forgiven for replying, 'If this is what victory feels like, can you imagine defeat!' Of course, when publications like the *Morning Star* suggests that the miners were not defeated, what they are in fact expressing is the outlook of the trade union tops, not least those in the NUM. They retain their well paid jobs, their perks, their prestige; for a rank and file miner, with the threat of redundancy and a tough management regime imposed in the pits since the return to work, the reality of defeat stares them in the face everyday.

We have pointed out that as the NUM's structure is undermined by the assault of the pit management, the dangers of a bureaucratic merger with the scab Union of Democratic Miners becomes more and more real. Such a tie-up would of course, be at the price of gutting the NUM of its militancy.

Yet this is precisely the type of 'solution' being offered by comrade Mick McGahey, a member of the EC of our Party. Ominously that grim reaper of the worker's movement, Kinnock, has been showing his slimy mug in places like the recent Durham miner's gala and even the South Wales one, despite the supposed 'left' credentials of the area's new president, Duffield.

Kinnock is naturally keen to see the UDMisation of the NUM as the Great Strike was acutely embarrassing to this open class traitor and he missed no opportunity to distance himself from it. So what can miners do to save their union and, through their union, their livelihoods?

In many quarters of the NUM, the type of militancy that underpinned the twelve month long strike has been discredited by the defeat. What miners could not win by class struggle, some reason, perhaps they can win by class collaboration. This idea, plus the demoralisation and disorientation of the best militants in the union, is providing the right with more and more room in the union. But what militants need to fight is not only the right in the union, but the old approach of left reformist politics, and for a new type of politics — revolutionary working class politics.

Kent

The pitfalls of old fashioned industrial militancy can be seen if we look at the struggle of the men in the Kent Area, traditionally one of the most

left in the country. In the strike, the men of this coalfield stayed near 100% solid and even after the strike had been officially called off, Kent voted to continue their dispute for the victimised men and stayed out for another week or so.

Now, however, the situation in Kent is dire: demoralisation has cut deep even into the ranks of the militants who formed the backbone of the Great Strike and the management has stepped up its offensive against the rights and working conditions of the miners. *Coal News*, the house rag of British Coal, reported the following: "Recent poor results in the Kent coalfield could place a serious mark against the future of the pits [in Kent — IM] if the trend is not reversed immediately, British Coal manager Frank Middleton told assembled union leaders in Dover."

Output is down and costs per gigajoule are up, claimed Middleton. The industry as a whole has had to face a £300 million cut in its income per year as a result of "fierce competition" — the cut in oil prices and the threat of cheap coal imports. Middleton went on to review the performances of the three pits in the area, Tilmanstone, Bettshanger and Snowdon.

"The future lies in your hands. The six point survival plan agreed between management and unions is the key to the coalfield's future. I believe management are playing their part. It is up to the men at the pits to ensure the rest of the bargain is kept." (August 1986).

Evidently British Coal is trying to squeeze the last drops of profit out of the Kent coalfield and its miners, before it cuts its losses and decimates the Area. They are attempting to hike up the rate of exploitation of the men, to bully and cow them by first threatening closure of their pits, then relieving them at the last moment on condition of miners working even harder and even resorting to pulling a fast one with the accounts to show bigger losses than have actually been made.

The reason that the management are confident in their manipulations and in their threats is because the NUM in Kent, along with other Areas have accepted the basic arguments that underpin British Coal's approach: that what is key is the profitability of the (capitalist) coal industry.

But miners must learn that such an approach is poison and spells doom for their jobs. After all, let's not forget how the Great Strike started in the first place. When the closure of Cortonwood was announced a massive programme of investment was just nearing completion in the pit which would have allowed new reserves to be tapped into, and just six months before, £40,000 had been lashed out on doing up the pit baths.

Capitalism knows no logic, no plan apart from the thirst of profit and this lust can lead to a massive waste of resources. Not least, this

waste involves a waste of human resources. In the Barnsley Panel before the strike, the NUM claimed a 'victory' when investment made uneconomic pits economic. Yet the reality of this 'victory' was that this investment in machinery and technology was used to replace miners!

Why should miners tie their jobs and lives to the profit levels of such an irrational system? We should start all our campaigns and fights not from what the bosses can afford to pay — sod them and their system — we should start from what the miners and other workers and their families need to lead full lives.

It is precisely because the NUM fought the Great Strike on the basis of the Plan for Coal and now the Kent Area is tangled up in this '6 point survival plan', both of which commit miners to the profit levels of 'their' industry, that neither one is now capable of effectively countering the arguments of British Coal and leading a no-nonsense fightback. If miners genuinely want to fight the devastation on their union, then the first thing they have to do is dump the arguments of capitalist economics and start fighting on the basis of working class politics.

Politicisation

Despite the scale and scope of the

twelve month long Great Strike, politics were more or less effectively kept out of the miners fight. Scargill and even the most militant of the leaders of the union tended to simply argue over the Board's figures or over definitions of "uneconomic". Although a lot of rhetoric was spouted about how the miners' battle was a war for the entire working class against the government, no real hard political lessons were drawn from this correct observation. Now however, is the time to strike.

The Tories, the scum and shit of the earth, whom millions of workers, youth and minorities burn to bury, are tearing themselves apart over South Africa. Far from this being the time for miners to keep their heads down, to accept redundancies and 'survival plans' because they have "no option", or because "now is not the time to fight" as we are told some sections of the leadership in Kent and as the majority of the National leadership are claiming, there has never been a better time for miners and all other sections of the workers to fight. Now is the time for militant leaflets in the Kent coalfield, for pit bulletins, for industrial action for the sacked men and for workers in South Africa: now is the time to really start fighting!

Ian Mahoney

Pictures don't lie but the Star does

Justice demanded for sacked miners



The poster says "All sacked and Jailed Miners"; the Star censors it to just "the sacked miners".

The National Justice for Mineworkers Campaign is the only serious national organisation fighting for the sacked and jailed men from the miners' Great Strike of 1984-85. However, there are a number of ambiguities in its platform. One of its original inspirations was the Justice for Mineworkers Bill that was introduced into the House of Commons, by the Campaign Group of Labour MPs to follow up composite resolution 69 passed by the Labour Party conference in Bournemouth in October 1985.

The bill, like the composite resolution, contains the very dubious call on "Her Majesty's Secretary of State for the Home Department" to "review the cases" of the jailed miners "punished for acts done in good faith". Could it be that the likes of Tony Benn were trying get others off the hook of having to support the lads jailed for 'serious' offences and only fight for amnesty for those sacked or jailed for 'non-serious' offences?

Although the campaign now says it intends to fight the interests of all sacked and jailed miners, it still promotes this bill. But we believe militants should work with a campaign which at least claims to be fighting for all sacked and jailed miners and to confront those like the *Morning Star* (see photo) who want to quietly drop the whole issue of the jailed men in order not to jeopardise the electoral chances of Kinnock.



BOOK

Nothing New

Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The Retreat From Class: A New 'True' Socialism*, Verso Press, pp.202, £6.95

THE ORIGINAL 'true' socialists, according to Marx in *The German Ideology*, "innocently take on trust the illusion... that it is a question of the 'most reasonable' social order and not the needs of a particular class and a particular time... True socialism, which is no longer concerned with real human beings but with 'Man' has lost all revolutionary enthusiasm and proclaims instead the universal love of mankind."

Wood identifies a fresh breed of true socialists, drawing their ideas from such as Althusser, Poulantzas, Laclau, Mouffe, Hindess, Hirst, and Steadman Jones. Devout readers of *Marxism Today*, coffee table journal of the British 'New True Socialists', will no doubt already be familiar with these names. She gives a good critique of these 'NTS' ideologies, what concepts unite them, and which differentiate them.

One shared concept of this trend is the separation of the political from the economic; what Wood calls the 'non-correspondence principle'.

This enables the 'NTS' to claim that there are no social, economic or historical determinants pushing society towards socialism, that therefore no one class — if they admit the existence of such things — has a specific interest or 'privileged position' in the struggle for socialism. 'Discourse' is substituted for class struggle as the motive force for socialist transformation.

Gone, of course, is any idea of smashing the state. Instead we are told that "the realization of democracy involves not the smashing of bourgeois democracy but its completion," (Alan Hunt, CPGB, cited on p. 131) Wood dismisses this with ease, showing that the democratic organs of the bourgeois state are inextricably linked with the nature of production under capitalism. Unlike previous forms of society, under capitalism all men are equally free to sell their labour power or to purchase that of others. The state need not intervene here, this exchange is regulated by the law of value (a law which some Euro-communist economists now deny). Obviously, though not to the Euros, the bourgeoisie's ability to buy and the proletariat's compulsion to sell labour power results in the bourgeoisie's advantage in being able to exploit this labour power. Where the state intervenes is to ensure the continuation of this state of affairs, and under conditions which are most beneficial to the capitalist. This was most clearly seen during the miners' Great Strike. To deny this, our 'creative Marxists' of *Marxism Today* must reject everything Marx ever wrote on the capitalist state and economy.

To give credence to their 'idol shattering' these arch-revisionists must target a well established set of ideas to test their teeth on. It is not, as Wood charges them, a straw Marx of their own making, though it is a straw Marx sure enough: any

Party member will recognise it as that of our centrists. Who could forget the political decapitation of Fergus Nicholson by Monty Johnstone in the pages of *7 Days* recently?

The relevance of this point — a crucial one — seems to hover just out of Wood's reach. She writes of the influence of Mao's Cultural Revolution on Althusser and Poulantzas, and of Ernesto Laclau's use of the late '20s to early '30s theories of the Communist Party of Germany to justify its capitulation to German nationalism, but can draw few conclusions from this. Both the subjectivism of Mao and the nationalism of the KPD were symptoms of the same disease — the rightward drift of the world communist movement from Stalin through to today.

It is not for nothing that the Euros trace themselves back to the beginning of the Popular Frontist period of the Comintern in 1935, and by defending such ground as their own the centrists are on a dead cert loser every time. The Euros are merely following through the logic of post-twenties communism:

"The growing menace of world imperialist war is causing all class, national and state forces to separate into two camps: *the camp of war and the camp of peace.*"

This pseudo-Marxist nonsense comes not from the lips of comrade Jon Bloomfield, but from Stalin's man Manuilsky, speaking at the seventh congress of the Comintern. In the light of this, can anyone claim that the ideas of *Marxism Today* are without precedent in our movement?

Today, our centrists around the Communist Campaign Group, *Straight Left* and the NCP go misty-eyed at the very mention of old-time CPGB General Secretary Harry Pollitt. Ah, the good days of the monolithic Marxist-Leninist CP, they sigh fondly. Not so. Pollitt was well versed in the type of politics, the essence of which the Euros have used so well. His 1947 booklet, *Looking Ahead*, claimed that "countries at present pursuing reactionary policies can have a halt called to them, and their peoples roused to the point where they insist on governments and policies fitting in with the ideas of world cooperation... There is a place in such a front for countries whether they are socialist or capitalist," (p36, my emphasis, AM) and on transforming (note well — not smashing) the state: "It will be necessary to purge from the State machine at every stage those elements who are working against the interests of the movement and the people" (p91).

Isn't it self evident that purging the (bourgeois) state of anti-working class elements is like trying to cure a disease of itself? Doesn't Pollitt, and by implication his centrist disciples today, share exactly the same illusions in the state as the Eurocommunists? That, after all, is what has given the right its strength; its willingness to draw the inescapable conclusion from the fundamental assumptions they share with the centrists. Hence the shoddy state of the Party's opposition.

This is not a purely British, or even European phenomena. Pollitt's *Looking Ahead* was to be the prototype of our Party's programme, the *British Road to Socialism*, solidly reformist in all versions the first of which was welcomed by Stalin.

Comrades Jacques, Johnstone and Co. do not, in the last analysis, trace themselves back to Althusser, or even to Mao, as Wood indicates, but right back to Stalin. For those of us who trace ourselves back to Marx and Lenin, the book's inability to show this is its central failing.

Alan Merrik



POLEMIC

Eminent Persons

The Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group, *Mission to South Africa*, Harmondsworth 1986, Penguin, pp. 176, £2.50.

THE Commonwealth Eminent Persons Group travelled extensively in southern Africa and met leaders of the South African government as well as the whole spectrum of opposition forces from the white Progressive Federal Party to the ANC in Zambia. They were also able to visit Nelson Mandela in Pollsmoor Prison three times and go to areas not normally open to foreigners.

The EPG was appointed under the Commonwealth Nassau Accord on South Africa in a desperate attempt by the assembled leaders to show "how a catastrophe might yet be averted". Yet as we know in the six months the group worked the crisis ridden South Africa produced a steady rise in the terror of the apartheid regime against the black masses until finally the state of emergency was imposed. The EPG quite correctly blames the apartheid system itself for the violence in South Africa. It says the guerilla war by the ANC and the inter-black violence must be blamed on apartheid, its repressive legislation and the economic inequalities it rests on.

Of course the EPG were not a bunch of liberal wallies. They were drawn from the establishment and appointed by the establishment. The co-chairmen of the group were Malcolm Fraser, Australian Prime Minister from 1975-83, and Olusegun Obasanjo head of government in Nigeria from 1976-9. Others included former cabinet ministers from Britain, Tanzania and India as well as an arch-bishop from Canada and a former President of the World Council of Churches from the Bahamas.

Because of this while the sick



The Eminent Persons

reality of apartheid shocked all its members — not least its black members — what concerned all of the 'Eminents' was saving South Africa's economy through pushing the South African government into negotiations with "representative organisations" not siding with the blacks in making revolution. Unless negotiations take place the EPG predicts the "writ of the government will be increasingly circumscribed" and "political upheaval and social unrest will accelerate and the flight of capital and professional skills and the economy's downward spiral."

The EPG accurately points to the splits in the government and white opinion in general. They say the government cannot rule in the old way. As to the blacks they "have had enough of apartheid" the report bluntly says. "They can no longer stomach being treated as aliens in their own country" ... and they are ready "to die for those convictions". In other words there is a revolutionary situation in South Africa.

The EPG sees the existence of a revolutionary situation just as *The Leninist* does. The EPG, just like us, does not believe the Botha government can indefinitely contain the revolutionary tide of mass anger against apartheid. But whereas we call for workers to take direct solidarity action against apartheid and its most important backer, British imperialism, they call for concerted international pressure to persuade Botha and the government into not merely reforming apartheid but introducing sweeping reforms and in a controlled manner dismantling apartheid. Thus as we have said while the comrades in Alexandra and Crossroads want AK47s the imperialists want reforms.

Unless these reforms are carried out and carried out quickly the EPG darkly warns its imperialist friends there will be a blood bath on a scale not seen since World War II. South Africa's economy will be wrecked

and prolonged civil war will be unleashed which, again as we have said, would end with the whole of southern Africa being drawn into the conflict. "The uncoordinated violence of today" the EPG report says "could become in the not too distant future a major armed conflict spilling well beyond South Africa's borders."

So the EPG calls for the freeing of Mandela and the legalisation of the ANC. The EPG refuses to paint Mandela and the ANC in communist colours. It attacks government attempts to portray the ANC "as an organisation dominated by communists and wedded to creating a Marxist state in South Africa." It quotes Tom Lodge "one of South Africa's foremost experts on the internal affairs of the ANC" to the effect that the ANC is an organisation of pragmatists, not ideologues.

Because of this, because it thinks the ANC can be controlled it urges Botha to enter into negotiations with it and give far reaching concessions. Seeing no evidence of any willingness to take steps in this direction from Botha and the National Party the EPG calls for "concerted action" by the Commonwealth which must include "effective economic measures". Unless they are taken the ANC could be forced into a radical corner and full-fledged guerilla war.

That the EPG proposals to prevent this have been left on the table by Thatcher shows the extent of the crisis of policy imperialism is gripped by when it comes to South Africa. But far from siding with the EPG we must recognise it is objectively aiming to prevent a revolution in South Africa and save capitalism. In the light of this we must fight for independent working class action against apartheid and Thatcher by using the methods of militant class struggle to force the Tory government to end its support for apartheid.

Michael Masso

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We must look to the actions of advanced workers, build from their actions, win other workers to follow their lead.

FRONTLINE Workers

Many workers have been taking their own action against the apartheid regime. As our own brief survey here shows, although at the moment workers' sanctions remain sporadic and isolated, the potential is there to unite the whole class around the actions of the advanced sections in a general strike to force the government to impose comprehensive sanctions.

Portsmouth



Andy Lavender

"there needs to be a general snowballing"

Last September Nupe members working in the stores of Portsmouth Hospital approached management to stop stocking South African produce. After receiving no satisfaction a boycott started in January and has been continuing in one form or another to the present day. Andy Lavender of Portsmouth Nupe, sees the key to success in spreading action. "The ideal situation would be if more places started taking action themselves. A number of local authorities have been changing their buying policy when formally approached; they see it as an issue they didn't want to get into confrontation on. Our authorities attitude was that they were not prepared to discuss 'foreign policy' with the union and that anyone who took action would be disciplined.

"When we started, we did feel terribly isolated. We didn't know what else was going on. There doesn't seem to be a very good accumulation of information in a central place. Other workers in the District were prepared to back us up

with solidarity action, but management were prepared to go to great lengths to defeat us; they brought in scabs, they tried to use a moral argument against us to blacken us in the public eye. We gained a moral victory, but in practical terms, it's a stand-off."

"The trade unions must definitely take a much stronger lead now. I certainly think there needs to be a general snowballing. Even if it starts off as a token gesture, it is important to get it moving in the first place."

Leicester

"the stronger the movement, the less chance of the government being able to say 'no'."

The brave actions of the Dunnes Store strikers in Dublin and the Nupe members in Portsmouth inspired other workers around the country. In direct response Nupe members in Leicester Royal Infirmary raised the issue of a boycott of South African produce. When it was put to the membership on March 12 there was a vote in favour. In fact, both the local management and Leicester Health Authority bent over backwards and the workers won an undertaking that they would not buy South African. So what was the key to the management's helpfulness? Charlie Sorell of Leicester Nupe gives his view.

"If they felt they could have broken our protest then they probably would have tried. But they had seen what had happened in Portsmouth and the publicity that that had attracted and they had no desire to line themselves up with apartheid. They didn't see there was any financial reason for continuing to buy South African when there were alternatives at the same cost. They also have a programme of centralising the whole stores operation and the last thing they wanted was anything that was going to disrupt that.

"The question of spreading the action is a tricky one. What we have to look at is the extent to which other stores are as well organised in terms of their union membership and commitment. We are 90% Nupe and we had the committed membership plus the leadership.

"The union has given a lot of publicity to the issue of South Africa internally, arguing for boycotts, supporting the Portsmouth action,

although I don't think they've given any publicity to what's been happening here. I'm not sure why.

"As to the whole question of a TUC-called general strike on the issue of the government's attitude towards sanctions and South Africa. I think that the more action that can be taken by workers in determining what they handle, the more areas that boycott South African goods under workers' control, the harder it is going to be for the government to maintain its present attitude to sanctions. They are going to be even more out on a limb. The ground is simply going to be cut from under their feet. The stronger the movement, the more widespread the movement, the less chance the government has of being able to say 'no'."

Aberdeen



Harry Bygate

"get off their backsides and do something!"

National Union of Seamen members up and down the country have also been taking direct action; but with very little publicity coming out about their actions. NUS seamen on Sealink Ferries in Harwich, on Townsend Thoresen in Felixstowe on the south coast, P&O and oil rig supply boat men operating out of Aberdeen in Scotland have all been involved in blacking South African goods. When Harry Bygate, the NUS branch secretary in Aberdeen suggested a workers' boycott of apartheid to the men on the ferries supplying the Orkney and Shetland Islands only four seamen, out of the entire crews of

four ships involved, voted against. Harry has found the main problems to be not lack of support from the seamen on the ships, or attacks from the management...

"Our problem was getting the dockers and railway workers to make some declaration on the issue. I was asked to visit the T&G and I was told in no uncertain terms that if we were talking about lorry drivers taking similar action, then there would be no joy.

"One of the most powerful AAM speakers is the T&G general secretary. Now he's been very good in meetings and all that type of thing. What I would like him to do is to tell his officials to get off their arses and do something! Because we are certainly not getting enthusiastic T&G officials up here.

"There is also a basic lack of communication. I was at the Anti-Apartheid conference in London. In one of the seminars Portsmouth Nupe said 'We seem to be doing this by ourselves, no one seems to be helping.' I sprang up and said what we were doing and immediately other people jumped up and saying what they had done. Everybody that was taking direct action tended to feel that they were the only ones in the country doing it. Also trade unionists, and I have pushed this, have asked the AAM in London and locally for a list of the goods that are South African orientated. But we have not yet got that list!

"I'm sure that my lads, the seamen, would be prepared to have a go at a protest strike to shift the government on sanctions. At the end of last year, things seemed to be lifting off. I've been involved in AAM work over the years, but this seemed to be the big one. Events in South Africa were making people talk. I'd never seen so much enthusiasm as in those two or three months. Now, its waning. We've got people who have gone cool on the idea — they're saying 'other trade unionists are not doing this.' So the TUC and the STUC have now really got to move!"

Dunnes Store, Dublin

"If someone had said to us we would have an effect on the Irish government... we would never have believed them."



Mary Manning

Still the most famous example of workers' sanctions. The Dunnes Store workers started out simply taking a lead from a circular sent through from their union. Their action sparked the Dublin government into changing its attitude to South Africa and from next January it says there will be a ban on imports from the apartheid regime. We asked Mary Manning of the Dunnes Store strikers for her reaction to our call for a TUC-called general strike to force the British government into taking at least the same measures as the government in the Twenty-six Counties.

"The point you make about workers' action and the potential it has to force the government to change policy is important. If someone had said to us when we came out on strike that we would have an effect on the Irish government and their attitude to sanctions, we would never have believed them.

"To think that we had such an effect, that the government has been forced to take sanctions, even though they are limited sanctions, is quite incredible. If more and more workers did that, then the British government would have to do something.

"The trades union leaderships in general are out of touch at best. We were over in Britain and a lot of them were trying to convince us that their members knew about South Africa, knew what was going on, whereas, in fact, they did not.

"Education of the members is a big factor. There has to be a hell of a lot of education. Because if a general strike was called and you didn't get the amount of support you wanted, then the government would ignore it. So we need a lot of educational work."

The Dunnes Store Strikers are still in dispute, despite the shift in position of the Dublin government. At the moment, the strikers exist on £23 a week union strike pay and need funds urgently. Donations to: Dunnes Store Strike Fund c/o Irish Distributive and Administrative Trade Union 9 Cavendish Row Dublin 1



In the vanguard of struggle

Edited version of the speech delivered by a member of the editorial board of *The Leninist* on August 3 1986 on the occasion of the 66th anniversary of the First Congress of the CPGB.

COMRADES, THE QUESTION of South Africa is on everyone's lips. The solidarity movement with the South African masses has become a genuine mass movement.

In Britain ten years ago anti-apartheid protests were counted in thousands. Now they have to be counted in tens of thousands and even hundreds of thousands. Today there is also a growing body of opinion in the establishment that says it is not a matter of 'if' there are going to be government sanctions but 'when'.

We have already elsewhere presented our initial analysis of and attitude towards the South African Communist Party and the problems of the South African revolution. What we must do now is to further develop our solidarity work with the South African masses and at this particular juncture this necessitates clarifying our position on sanctions: the nodal point in solidarity work today.

It is obvious that given the balance of class forces today whatever measures Thatcher, Reagan, the EEC heads of government and other imperialists take over South Africa will primarily be designed to protect the interests of their imperialism in that country. True steps

have been and will be taken in response to the mass anti-apartheid movement. But this is done in order to placate and divert mass pressure, given as a sop. Those who expect the USA and Britain, the world's number one and number two imperialist robbers, to line up with the forces of national liberation and social progress in South Africa are mistaken to say the least.

CONUNDRUM

Nonetheless, if we look at the problem imperialism faces in South Africa it is presented with a conundrum. On the one hand if imperialism does not take a lead in bringing about change in South Africa, which must as a minimum see the dismantling of the apartheid system, then the black masses will be thrown into the arms of the forces of revolution and the whole sub-continent could end up in the Soviet orbit.

On the other hand, it seems that every reform Botha has conceded has merely wetted the appetite of the black masses for not only getting black faces to replace whites at the head of government but for political change to encompass socio-economic changes by taking the anti-apartheid revolution uninterruptedly to socialist tasks.

So for the imperialists it must seem that whichever way they turn, whichever option they

choose, the consequences are fraught with dangers. What we can discern therefore is not just a crisis of policy in the ruling class in South Africa itself but a crisis of policy for imperialism internationally.

These imperialist 'friends' of the South African people in office, are therefore doing their best to push Botha into being seen to end apartheid and then refusing to threaten even the most innocuous measures which might help persuade him to comply with their talk of reform.

Likewise they make it a principle not to talk to 'terrorists' and after branding the ANC such an organisation they attempt to split the revolutionary alliance by setting up its leader, Nelson Mandela, as the last hope for peace and demand prison visits to see him.

They proclaim the benefit of foreign investments in South Africa as a force for change, prattle on about 'constructive engagement' and then agree to restrictions being placed on new investments, all in the midst of companies pulling out because of low profitability in South Africa and the most sweeping changes in the apartheid system ever seen.

Clearly the imperialists are not only in intellectual confusion but have no clear sighted policy with which to guide their actions. They only have doubts and fears. Reagan's transparently crocodile tears, the Commonwealth

Eminent Persons' Group, the meeting between Mrs Chalker and Oliver Tambo and humiliating southern Africa trips for Sir Geoffrey Howe, all result from a series of internal divisions and weaknesses in imperialism internationally, above all in the ruling class in Britain.

ESTABLISHMENT CLAMOUR

The intransigent stand of Thatcher and her cabinet against sanctions is leaving the government increasingly isolated. There is now a noisy clamour from important establishment institutions stretching from the Church of England to the *Financial Times*, and from important establishment figures stretching from Neil Kinnock, leader of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition, to Elizabeth Windsor herself for Thatcher to do a U-turn. Even in the Tory Party itself — the preferred general staff of the ruling class — differences are being openly voiced.

That Thatcher finds herself at odds with so many different elements of the bourgeois order goes to show how British imperialism has been unable to weld itself into a united body over South Africa.

One does not have to be a genius to explain Thatcher's reluctance to impose sanctions and Britain's unofficial alliance with the junior

imperialism of South Africa. The fall of apartheid in South Africa while serious for international imperialism would not be a body blow. This cannot be so said with such certainty about Britain.

It might no longer be the world's leading imperialist power but it has a greater exposure in South Africa, in both absolute and relative terms, compared with its imperialist rivals. Its greater absolute exposure can be seen in the following table.

Source and value of foreign investment in South Africa

(market value mid-1985)

Country	£bn
Britain	12.0
USA	10.0
Federal Germany	2.0
France	1.5
Switzerland	1.0
Rest of world	5.0
Total	31.5

The United Kingdom South Africa Trade Association reports that South Africa is "Britain's 12th largest export market" and "represents between 7 and 10 percent of total overseas investment, and some 400 groups quoted on the London Stock Exchange have one or more South African subsidiaries." It also says Britain's total gross income in 1982 from South Africa was around £3.5 billion. (*Financial Times* August 2 1986)

These figures also point to the fact that as well as Britain being the most exposed in absolute terms, in relative terms this exposure is far greater. If we compare the economic weight of Britain to that of Federal Germany or France, let alone the USA, it is clear that Britain has far more to lose proportionally.

Thus while the USA's £10 billion invested in South Africa puts it a close second to the leading investor Britain, this accounts for only 1% of its overseas investments, while Britain's £12 billion represents between 7 and 10% of its. So if we take into account the size of Britain's economy it can be seen that in terms of exports and imports, investments and earnings, Britain's interests in South Africa are of importance to it to a much greater extent than any of its rivals.

Thatcher knows this along with the senility of British capital compared with the USA, Federal Germany and Japan, as well as the tendency for it to be concentrated to a higher degree in the mining sector, where super-profits rest on apartheid in its most rigid form, makes Britain much more vulnerable than others to any rocking of the apartheid boat.

No wonder while Commonwealth leaders like Hawke in Australia and Gandhi in India can afford to make grand gestures Thatcher has dug in her heels over sanctions. She has even foolishly elevated her argument against sanctions to one of principle: making herself politically very vulnerable in the process.

Of course Britain joined the US and other imperialist powers in taking measures against the USSR after its intervention in Afghanistan, including boycotting the Moscow Olympics. So Thatcher's principled stance is nothing more and nothing less than a self-serving pose dictated by the interests of Britain's transnational monopolies and bloated banks. For them Thatcher has done her best to prevent, delay, and then temper token measures imposed on South Africa by the UN, the Commonwealth and the EEC.

SANCTIONS LOBBY

The growing sanctions lobby within the ruling class argue that unless they are put into effect there will be a revolution in South Africa. As if this were not enough, they fear, it could uninterruptedly go from being a political, anti-apartheid revolution, to a socialist one. (South Africa's *Financial Mail* was said by comrade Joe Slovo, during his Conway Hall speech marking the 65th anniversary of the formation of the SACP, to have reported a survey which showed that a clear majority of urban blacks favoured socialism). Worse, they also fear Namibia, Zimbabwe, Zambia, the whole sub-continent would be swept up into the revolutionary vortex, and because Britain has again a disproportionately greater stake in these countries than its imperialist rivals it would suffer dire consequences.

Undoubtedly the economic, political and ideological weight of a socialist South Africa would create ideal conditions for the development of working class power throughout the

region and eventually a federation of socialist states of southern Africa centred on South Africa, much as the Russian proletariat drew round it fraternal socialist republics from Tsarism's Asian colonies in the wake of October 1917.

Thus when we talk about the need to build solidarity with the black masses in South Africa and the need for their revolution to go uninterruptedly from democratic to socialist tasks we are not just talking about what is good for them but for southern African as a whole. If the South African revolution does not go uninterruptedly from democratic to socialist tasks under the dictatorship of the proletariat the whole sub-continent will find itself lying prostrate with an imperialist knife at its throat. We have no doubt whatever that the ability of countries like Angola and Mozambique, which have had anti-colonial, anti-imperialist revolutions, to pull themselves out of their abject backwardness does not rest on becoming economically independent of South Africa but on the ability of the workers in South Africa to take the lead in the anti-apartheid revolution and to become the hegemon over the new state.

We are also talking about what will be good for our working class in Britain. In a very real sense a blow struck against apartheid in Crossroads or Alexandra is a blow against the system which oppresses us. The manner in which capitalists rule in Britain rests to no small extent on their imperialist exploitation of southern Africa.

In an effort to prevent the revolution in South Africa rocking the foundations of capitalism in Britain the likes of Healey, Owen and Steel argue that serious economic measures be taken to whip Botha into dismantling apartheid through sweeping reform. This they insist, despite all the evidence, could see apartheid ended in a controlled and therefore safe way.

To pose an independent working class alternative to these forces we raised the slogan "Imperialism wants reform — comrades want AK47s" at the June 28 AAM demonstration. This met with a warm response from countless militants fed up to the back teeth with pro-imperialist scum being allowed to use the platforms of the AAM.

FAIR WEATHER FRIENDS

Of course these champions of imperialist sanctions are fair weather friends who along with the anti-revolutionary licorice all-sorts of liberals, peaceniks and Christians, who dwell in the ranks of the AAM, will desert the black masses as soon as they gain the upper hand and become a threat to the interests of British imperialism.

Those who scoff at the idea of anyone, who has even the slightest of human feeling, deserting the cause of the black masses of South Africa should learn a lesson or two from the experience of Ireland.

Ireland has been oppressed by British imperialism in the most brutal ways. Time and time again the Irish people have fought to rid their land of the hated British and time and time again terror, draconian laws and divide and rule were used to beat them down.

Marx and Engels were four square with the Irish people against Britain and called for the working class in Britain to do likewise as "the first condition for their own social emancipation". (*Marx and Engels Ireland and the Irish Question* p.408) Lenin praised the position of Marx and Engels declared it to be a model of proletarian internationalism which all communists should take to their hearts.

Of course as is well known Marx and Engels had countless battles with British trade union leaders over the Irish question. These gentlemen looked down upon the rebellious and unrespectable Irish. They considered it their holy mission to bring the civilising influence of British trade unionism to them.

Lenin and the young CPGB had to combat similar pro-imperialist philistines who in the name of socialism excused the continuation of the national oppression of Ireland. Yet by the late 1960s because of the corrosive effects of decades of centrism and the corrupting influence of imperialism the CPGB leadership had itself fallen into the philistine camp.

Thus today while virtually every tendency on the British political terrain calls for the release of Nelson Mandela there is almost unanimous opposition to the IRA and Sinn Féin.

The Labourites consider the South Africa question safe. It is also a useful stick with which to beat the unpopular Margaret Thatcher. In contrast Ireland is not just close to home, it is considered Britain's backyard by most bourgeois

politicians. In the Six Counties of northern Ireland there is not only an armed struggle which sees British soldiers killed but a struggle which directly challenges the territorial legitimacy of the British state, the United Kingdom.

Ireland is therefore an acid test of internationalism. It allows no room for hypocritical gestures of solidarity from aspiring Labourite Prime Ministers. Ireland is too important to allow rival establishment parties to 'play politics' with, a united front must be maintained at all costs.

While the revolutionary situation in South Africa keeps the establishment at loggerheads, what would happen if the masses in South Africa were to get the AK47s they have clamoured for? What if the SACP could establish working class hegemony over the democratic revolution? Would the pacifist opponents of apartheid recognise the difference between the violence of the oppressed and the oppressors? Or would they start blaming the oppressed for provoking reaction as our CPGB does with the Six Counties?

Surely those like the Bishops of a Church of England which is an integral part of British monopoly capital, Labour and Alliance MPs whose main stated concern is to stop a revolution in South Africa are likely to openly eschew the black masses as their 'final' battle erupts.

Certainly Messers Healey, Owen and Steel do not, like Thatcher, have the responsibility of government. If they did perhaps even now they would be singing a different tune.

Unfair? Well, during a recent fierce parliamentary debate on South Africa Thatcher took great delight in revealing that Healey had supported the sale of defence equipment to South Africa when Minister of Defence in the Wilson government.

Although Healey shouted "No. That is an absolute lie" Thatcher was able to quote from the diaries of the late Richard Crossman recalling how Healey had lined up with George Brown when he advocated supplying South Africa with maritime weapons as long as they could not be used for internal suppression... Healey did not shout back a second time, even though Thatcher said she would have been happy to accept his denial.

Owen has an equally unsavoury record. When he was Labour foreign minister Britain vetoed UN resolutions calling for general economic sanctions against South Africa. Only Steel has clean hands. But then he has had the good fortune, at least when it comes to the level of hypocrisy he has to employ, of never having been in government.

Under the pressure of mass protests, in order to pull the rug from under the feet of the parliamentary opposition and with the hot breath of the South African revolution on her neck, it is quite possible for Thatcher, along with the other major imperialist powers, to impose sanctions. Nonetheless who can doubt Thatcher's extremely exposed position on the whole question, the dangers faced by British imperialism and the splits in the ruling class.

It is worth asking as an aside why the ruling class has not been affected by the running sore of Ireland to an ever greater extent?

Who can deny that there has been a revolutionary situation in existence in the Six Counties of northern Ireland since 1969? The Six Counties is in the United Kingdom and obviously Ireland as a whole is nearer and more important geographically, racially, culturally, economically and historically to Britain than South Africa. So why has not the ruling class been thrown into crisis by the Irish question as it has by the South Africa question?

Well the first thing we can say is that while there is a revolutionary situation in Ireland this is at present confined to the Six Counties alone.

Secondly, given the split in the working class in the Six Counties, the ability of British imperialism to maintain Loyalist workers as a labour aristocracy, the neo-colonial status of the Twenty-six Counties and the sheer weight of armed might Britain is able bring into play against half a million or so nationalists, the forces of Irish liberation find themselves undefeated but unable to grasp victory.

Because of this splits in the ruling class have in the main taken place within the Six Counties itself and between the satraps in the Six Counties and the ruling class in Britain.

Thus there is both the need and the possibility of a broad agreement in the ruling class over Ireland which finds the Labour Party agreeing to a bi-partisan approach in opposition and carrying out measures perhaps even more oppressive than the Tories when in office.

If the working class movement were to take up the active struggle for national liberation in

Ireland, as it has done in South Africa, if the revolutionary situation in the Six Counties were to spread to engulf the whole island of Ireland, then there can be little doubt that the ruling class united front although needed could not be sustained, so great would the pressures on it be. If then the same numbers could be mobilised for the cause of Irish freedom onto the streets of London as over South Africa, that would be the end of the beginning of the end of British imperialism and splits and conflict within its ranks would be brought to boiling point.

With this in mind we must emphasise in our propaganda that the inability to create a united ruling class front over South Africa has nothing to do with revulsion against the helot-like degradation of those in the 'homelands', the institutionalised racist inequality and the perverted Old Testament ideology of apartheid. Britain's record in Ireland, its fostering and maintenance of sectarianism amongst Loyalist workers and its use of systematic terror prove this class does not suffer from basic human feelings, at least if its economic and political interests are at stake.

It's split over South Africa, is ironically, like it's unity over Ireland, the result of what Britain has at risk. In the case of South Africa it is also a direct product of the singleminded determination of the masses not to be ruled in the old way, their willingness to die to see the destruction of apartheid and the growing belief in ruling circles that they will achieve their aim of liberation sooner rather than later. It is therefore because the black masses look like being on the road to victory (unfortunately not yet the case in Ireland) we see the imperialists internationally, and in Britain in particular, plunged into a crisis of policy.

LEFT IN CRISIS

Now, if we look at how the debate around the question of sanctions has developed, it can be seen that the crisis that grips the establishment, also affects most of the left. This is because it is ideologically and politically tied to the bourgeoisie through loyalty to the Labour Party. And the crisis is becoming ever more visible and pronounced.

It is indicative of the slide to the right of the left that while most could only manage to tail Scargill and the NUM leadership, and Benn and the Labour Party left throughout the miners' Great Strike, over South Africa most are determined to tail the open class collaborationist TUC led by scab Willis and the bosses workers' party led by scab Kinnock.

Despite its growth and new found ability to mobilise tens of thousands the AAM is not immune from the wider problems facing the left. It seems determined to emulate the CND. This is a highway paved with good intent, but is ultimately doomed to disappointment because it will confine solidarity to the safe contours of Labourite/TUC respectability.

This has been taken to its most abject depths by the *Morning Star*. Not content to uncritically act as a cheerleader for the ANC, or painting it in communist colours like so many centrists, the ultra-respectable *Morning Star* goes in for censoring material the TUC might find offensive.

Even the bourgeois media reported the devastating criticisms the leaders of the South African NUM, Cyril Ramaphose and James Motlatsi, made of the TUC in their address to the British NUM conference. They slammed its vacillation, its inability "to take a right decision, holding back and not sticking out, and going many steps back." Yet the *Star* kept silent on these remarks. Was this bad reporting? Surely not. It could only result from a cringing desire not to offend the TUC. That this is the case can be seen over the papers reporting of Oliver Tambo. When he called for workers sanctions silence was again the word. Obviously another example of the *Morning Star* putting the blue pencil through any report which might, even indirectly, be seen as criticising the do-nothing TUC. In fact the nub of the *Morning Star*'s attacks on Thatcher have been little more than an echo of those of the David's Steel and Owen. The *Star* has indeed made it its task to defend Britain's honour and standing in the world by winning Thatcher to see reason.

There are naturally a number of different facets to the crisis of the left. In the realm of ideas because South Africa is a living revolution it can act as a laboratory where the theories and predictions of various groups can be tested against the acid test of reality.

Utopian dreams of a peaceful evolution to socialism in South Africa were holed in 1950 with the Suppression of Communism Act and sank with Sharpeville just over a decade later.

Clearly the black masses have no use for the reformist nonsense enshrined in the *British Road to Socialism*.

Trotskyism, Trotsky's so-called 4th International and the numerous contemporary 4th Internationals claiming the mantle of Trotsky came into existence because of the supposed counterrevolutionary role of world communism since 1933. Yet in South Africa the Trotskyite insistence that the world communist movement is counterrevolutionary and nothing more is exposed for all to see by the honourable role of the SACP.

The parading of its banners at every important mass political funeral, the coffins draped in the red flag with the SACP's hammer and sickle symbol, the leading positions SACP members occupy in the MK and the ANC, the stirring calls to make revolution by the Party's organs is the answer of the life itself to the false theory of Trotskyism. And whatever its faults, or the ambiguities in the SACP's programme only the hopelessly doctrinaire could continue to stand by an ideological tradition proved by life itself to be incorrect.

With chauvinistic arrogance many Trotskyite sects while so easily dismissing the SACP offer to the black masses in South Africa the model of Britain's truly counterrevolutionary Labour Party as their best hope for liberation. Failing that others stick with the tried and tested and useless formula of calling for a South African clone of their own particular 'International', anything other than confront the task of dealing honestly and comradesly with the growing proletarian vanguard organised in the ranks of the SACP.

SANCTIONS

Now let us turn to the question of communists and sanctions. Before dealing specifically with sanctions and South Africa let us say a few words on sanctions in general. Well firstly we do not take a position of favouring the imposition of government sanctions against regimes which are oppressive as a point of principle. In general we are not in favour of demanding government sanctions against fascist states. Such demands, in the hands of left reformists, can easily pass the initiative to the government, based as they are on class collaborationist reasoning.

The idea that the government is 'ours' invariably tends to strengthen, not weaken, pro-imperialist illusions in the minds of the working class, projecting as they do the government of capitalist Britain as a force for good, or at least a potential force for good. Thus when it comes to Ireland most of the misleaders of workers' movement concentrate on trying to persuade the imperialist monster to act a fairy god mother to the Irish it has starved, tortured and massacred from generation to generation.

As well as this objection we are for the maximum development of the world economy. We want to see the best possible conditions for the growth of the working classes across the planet. The working class is the grave digger of capitalism in South Africa and quite possibly for starters it will bury apartheid. This revolutionary ability rests on its growth — something which is hardly promoted by long term trade and investment boycotts, assuming of course they were even possible.

Certainly if we want countries to be judged on oppression British imperialism with its colonial plunder, its promotion of the slave trade and its genocide against the Irish must come near the top. But then we do not look at the world with a check list and go round the supermarket, buying or not buying, according to some points system of morality or immorality. This would be liberalism and has no real political impact. Such an approach is a cop out from the task of building real solidarity.

So we would not favour sanctions against South Africa simply because of the existence of apartheid. They would have had little impact during the 1950s and 60s and even throughout most of the 70s. More than that they would never have been forced on the ruling class and in our view should not have been a demand of the solidarity movement. Indeed there were not even any deep divisions in the ruling class through which mass actions could find expression and exert serious leverage during these years.

WHY THE SPLITS?

The British ruling class is in crisis over South Africa not because there were 100,000 people out in the streets last June 28 and 250,000 people listened to Boy George at Clapham

Common. Those people were mobilised by the AAM because of the existence of a revolutionary situation in South Africa. The revolutionary situation splits the ruling class in South Africa and Britain.

It is the creation of Cosatu, the huge political strikes on May 1 and June 16, the fighting comrades in Crossroads, Soweto and Alexandra, and the failure of Botha's draconian emergency measures to suppress the revolutionary situation which calls into existence a mass movement in solidarity with the South African revolution. Let us have no doubt about it this is what we are arguing for. We are not and could not realistically call for mass action simply because blacks in South Africa get a rotten deal, that racism stinks and Thatcher is dragging Britain's name though the mud.

Yesterday's *Morning Star* (August 2 1986) parroted the heads of Commonwealth trade unions and declared "nothing less than immediate mandatory sanctions against the evil regime of apartheid will bring freedom to the people of South Africa". We disagree. Obviously no action by British or Commonwealth workers can bring down apartheid. This can only be done by South Africans. Freedom will not be given to them, they will take it. What we fight for is the creation of favourable conditions internationally for the victory of the black masses in South Africa and for their revolution to go uninterrupted from democratic to socialist tasks.

We can build a mass movement in solidarity with the black masses because they are fighting to take their freedom not because they are oppressed. Defeat creates sympathy but eventually also passivity. After all countless revolutionaries, democrats and communists endure imprisonment, torture and persecution in countless countries under the iron heel of counterrevolutionary terror. Yet while their sufferings elicit solidarity, by and large this tends to be low key, small scale and has little mass impact. Strength and a determination to achieve victory breeds and demands active solidarity.

Those who doubt it should look at the huge groundswell that developed around the Vietnamese NLF after the Tet Offensive, how the Bay of Pigs victory won Cuba millions of friends. Likewise the Sandinistas have through their refusal to bow before Reagan triggered into action protests throughout the major cities of the United States.

Compare these examples to the remorseless decline of the Chile Solidarity Campaign after its first couple of big mobilisations, and the lack of mass activity in support of workers in countries like Iran or Turkey. Even the unholy alliance of semi-fascist Pilsudskites, liberals, Labourites, Trotskyites, Tories and Euro-communists backing the defeated counterrevolutionary Solidarnosc, has declined to the point of irrelevancy, since it was launched with the help of the BBC in 1981.

It is the inability of the apartheid regime to defeat the liberation movement, despite its array of repressive institutions and methods, which has generated admiration and a desire to actively help in order to see the struggle to the point of victory. Advanced workers throughout the world have been inspired by the South African black masses because of their power, not the fact that they have for generations been downtrodden by apartheid.

The light of victory at the end of the long tunnel of anti-apartheid struggle no longer seems small or distant, it is this that fires people into all sorts of actions. From getting the Co-op to boycott South African peaches, to non-stop picketing of the Trafalgar Square embassy, from blacking trade with apartheid and to giving money to *Umsebenzi* (the paper of the South African Communist Party) — all are the result of the strength of the black masses not their weakness.

Given this what should communists in Britain fight for?

As the AAM has shown, the 'restrictive measures' Thatcher has already agreed to are full of loopholes. A blind eye has been turned to breaches of the UN arms embargo by companies such as Plessey, and although guidelines were issued in 1979 banning North Sea oil deliveries, British Petroleum and Shell alone accounted for 40% of South Africa's oil imports.

So if Thatcher did agree to sanctions under present conditions there is little doubt they would in essence be exactly the same as those imposed against Ian Smith's Rhodesia, when under both Labour and Tory governments, British based transnationals carried on a flourishing trade in a whole range of goods and

services

LABOURITE MENDACITY

That being the case why is so much of the left, including most tendencies in the Communist Party, calling upon Thatcher to join with Healey, Owen and Steel do a Harold Wilson?

In part it is because of the tailism of much of the left. Because the ANC called for Thatcher to impose sanctions some insist we must 'follow their lead' and do no more. Most have simply retreated from any pretence of fighting for working class political independence. Instead of looking to working class power, all demands are framed in such a way as to be acceptable to the trade union and Labour Party bureaucracy.

These mendacious misleaders are quite prepared to head protest movements as long as they do not commit them to anything serious. The mentality of these ladies and gentlemen is a mixture of the second rate Sunday school preacher and the third class plageriser, they have, as *Militant* supporters know, the talent of a bully and as the House of Lords shows the ambition of a lap dog and they are tied hand and foot to British imperialism and its interests. Because of this their opposition to apartheid should be seen for what it is — posturing for the consumption of rank and file activists.

The Norman Willis, Rodney Bickerstaffe, Jimmy Knapps and Ron Todds of this world, are past masters of the empty, but militant sounding, rhetoric of conference hall and mass rally. Above all because of their wish to get back into the 'corridors of power' with the return of the 'next Labour government' they have no problem in supporting tokenistic consumer boycotts and sponsoring protest demonstrations which can be used to link Thatcher's name with apartheid and more importantly the buck of responsibility for taking action against apartheid can be thus self rightously passed to her government.

Last year's TUC resolution was a classic example of such buck passing. It concluded "Congress instructs the General Council to urge the British government to apply sanctions against South Africa and calls all unions to consider ways in which they can usefully oppose the South African regime". This sounds good but is sufficiently vague not to commit the TUC or its affiliates to direct action.

More than that with the sanctions ball safely in the Tories court the TUC and Labour Party fat cats can sit back and glow while other TUC and Labour Party fat cats praise them for their bravery, extol their internationalism and magnificent solidarity. Then before the rank and file they can then parade their gaudy indignation at Thatcher's refusal to act.

Unfortunately, far from exposing these emperors of the labour movement our CPGB official press and many others flatter, promote and fawn before them. But there are those, and they now include the South African NUM and the ANC, who have the audacity to cry out loud 'these emperors have no clothes', who say solidarity must be concrete if it is to be worth anything, that far from waiting for Thatcher to fight apartheid we must look to working class strength and organisation.

This means more than praising the Portsmouth health workers for having "given the lead" as Rodney Bickerstaffe told the AAM's Clapham Common rally. It means escalating their action, using their stand to inspire others and above all generalising the fight against apartheid and anchoring it firmly on the bedrock of the class struggle in Britain itself.

CLASS STRUGGLE BEDROCK

Unless this is done there is a danger of workers' solidarity being limited to protest politics when it could shake the very system to its foundations. So while we must promote, support and defend workers taking isolated actions, every effort must be made to avoid the pitfalls of tokenism and the heroic but doomed gesture. Indeed, the might of the entire working class movement must be mobilised, and taken to the highest possible level, in order to generate really effective solidarity with the South African masses.

The first step in this direction is workers taking action against their employers because they are directly dealing with apartheid. But this by definition can only apply to certain groups of workers.

Take the miners for example. They are still the best organised and most militant section of the working class in Britain. How can they fight for the victory of the South African revolution? Many a left reformist loves to mix British

chauvinist poison with 'international solidarity'. They therefore argue for the digging of British coal and import controls against South African coal (as well as many other foreign goods). This is very, very dangerous. Such 'solidarity' must be fought like the plague.

We all know the Thatcher government will not impose water tight sanctions at this moment in time through its own volition. Will it do so as a result of pleadings by the TUC? Hardly. Will demonstrations change its mind? Not of themselves.

So how can we avoid simply going through the ritual of solidarity, how to develop action which really bites not only against apartheid but also against British capitalism itself? After all the two go together like a horse and carriage.

We say this can most effectively be done through fighting for a general strike. Now we do not put forward the demand for a general strike lightly, we certainly are not like those who have elevated this tactic to the equivalent to one of the Ten Commandments for the working class. A general strike is not an article of faith to be put forward on every possible occasion, under all circumstances.

But it is a weapon that can be used to unite the working class against the capitalists as a class and their state. A general strike therefore raises working class struggle to a political level and when it comes to South Africa that is what is needed.

Is a general strike feasible, or to use the current vogue word of the left reformists, is it realistic? Some militants say mass solidarity with South Africa is a pipe dream while the rank and file will not even fight for their own wages and conditions.

We reject the false theory that politics mechanically follows economics. We must also reject the notion that the balance of class forces in Britain today is stable.

The starting point of communists is what is needed. Not what seems immediately obtainable. We communists understand full well that workers can fight on political issues tomorrow when today they have proved reluctant to fight for their own wages. We reject the passive approach which can only see things as they are but never how they must be. Communists not only study the existing mood of the working class, the balance of class forces, we also fight for what is needed, and basing ourselves on the most class conscious workers, do all in our power to mobilise the necessary forces to bring it about.

With this approach what seems a flight of fantasy one day becomes reality the next. This is simply because an active approach has been used which takes into account the dynamic of the class struggle and does not wallow in the passivity of non-class conscious workers, the habit and grind of day-to-day existence. Marxism-Leninism aims to change things, raise the mass of workers to communist consciousness. It does not simply accept things as they are.

This rejection of defeatism, the mundane art of the possible, is in fact the only realistic course for revolutionaries to adopt. The South African masses demand our solidarity and have a right to expect it.

This does not mean we should ignore harsh realities. In fact it necessitates confronting the truth about the recent past. Although the working class in Britain is not shrinking, nor has it lost its distinct historic role, it suffered a defeat when the miners' Great Strike went down. But defeat though it was, it was not strategic in nature. Working class morale not working class potential suffered a setback with the defeat of the miners. This must be emphasised because Thatcher and the bosses seem strong and our class feels weak.

At root this is because we are still dominated by reformist misleaders who did everything not to fight alongside the miners and are now doing everything not to fight over anything.

Yet as we have shown Britain's ruling class is today divided. What is more its economy is in no great shape and the last thing it wants is the working class asserting itself over South Africa, an issue on which it is acutely vulnerable.

We must not be daunted by the successes Thatcher has scored. The key question must be to reequip the working class with a new leadership. This is not only necessary it is possible. The divisions in the ruling class provide an opening for mass discontent. Because of divisions in the ruling class mass actions can have a far greater impact than when the ruling class is united.

Let me give an example of this. Look at the massive protests against nuclear weapons. Hundreds of thousands have been out on the streets over the last twenty or thirty years calling

for Britain to junk nuclear weapons. And yet with every decade or so that goes by governments, both Labour and Tory, have the latest generation of nuclear hardware delivered to the armed forces. When in opposition the Labourites make anti-nuclear noises but in the run up to an election this is muted and if elected to office reversed. The need for ruling class consensus on this question and the ability to achieve one dictates this and prevents mass protests from having a decisive impact. But once the ruling class is divided, at loggerheads one section with another, an opening is created for working class advance.

Objectively the working class is strong, if it were won to communist politics the bourgeoisie would soon be heard of only in history books — remembered but not mourned. Certainly working class trade union organisations are intact and great chunks of it have an axe to grind with Thatcher, not least large numbers of blacks, who because of their experience of racism in Britain have every reason to strike a blow against racism in its 'purist' expression in South Africa and its most important international prop in the shape of the Thatcher government.

A large body of allies, could also rapidly be won to the side of the advanced section of the working class, such as the unemployed and students, if this section could be united around a decisive, imaginative strategy. Of course for this to happen the character of the movement in solidarity with the black masses in South Africa must not be dictated by middle class elements, as has been the case with the peace movement, let alone forces from the bourgeoisie itself.

Progress can best be made if we take as our starting point the psychology, determination and actions of the most advanced elements in the working class itself. We therefore look to the example set by dockers in Southampton, the healthworkers in Portsmouth and the Dunnes shopworkers in Dublin. Not as a moral example for the Tories to emulate as does the *Morning Star*, but as the starting point of a campaign for a general strike demanding the government sever British links with apartheid. We must turn our thoughts to how this is to be achieved not hide behind backward sections of the working class like those defeatists who concoct theories about a 'downturn' and look for reasons why there cannot be decisive action. If we were to take as our starting point the underdevelopment of the working class we would, if we were consistent, end up preaching racism, sexism and big nation chauvinism.

We would argue that the actions of advanced workers can be made really effective if we fight to force the TUC to call a general strike unless the government imposes mandatory comprehensive sanctions. What we are talking about is a real general strike not a token one hour stoppage as Ron Todd wants to limit things to. We must aim for the method that will bring about what we want.

The struggle of the South African masses would be greatly aided by sanctions imposed through working class direct action and power. This should not be doubted. South Africa is in the midst of a revolutionary crisis; because of this such a measure could help tip the scales against apartheid. The South African economy is dependent on foreign imports in a whole range of key areas in both industry and defence. It is also reliant on continued inflows of capital, as well as the export of gold, diamonds and the like. Because of this sanctions imposed through workers' action would deepen the inner-crisis of the South African ruling class and give the black masses a tremendous fillip.

What we are fighting for is not to persuade the government, bring it to reason and a patriotic sense of what is best for Britain. We are for forcing the government to concede to our demands. Sanctions imposed in this way have two main advantages.

Firstly, they can be made water tight through being policed by the working class itself. Nothing should rely on government honesty.

Secondly, such a fight could play a decisive part in exposing and replacing the misleaders of our class.

If a demonstration of 100,000 could be mobilised demanding the TUC call a general strike to force the government to impose sanctions, if a strike wave against trade with apartheid began to gather momentum, if trade union branches, trades councils across the country were flooding the TUC with resolutions calling for a general strike, the TUC could be forced into a position of countenancing general strike action be circumvented by other bodies which emerge during the course of struggle. This would unleash the full energy,

pent up anger and creative power of the working class. Under such conditions, a united front approach, where communists join in action with workers still dominated by Labourism, would quickly see many reformist leaders exposed or shoved aside.

PLACING DEMANDS

There are those who argue we should place no demands on the government, because it is a bosses government, or even the TUC, because it acts as an agent of the bosses. This stance is understandable but wrong. Communists must deal with the real world. The bourgeoisie in Britain (and for that matter anywhere) can only be vanquished by exerting the utmost effort and thought to skilfully using every, even the smallest, rift amongst them. We must, to put it in another way, use every opportunity to win the masses towards communism.

As we have indicated, at present the question of sanctions stands as the main contradiction running through politics in Britain. We communists do not, of course, take as our point of reference divisions in the ruling class. We oppose the theory and practice of siding with the 'progressive' wing of the bourgeoisie against the reactionary wing. Opposed to this lesser of two evils approach we fight for working class political independence from all other classes — in particular in British conditions independence from the ideas and institutions of the ruling class.

To do this it must be stated quite categorically we must take full advantage of and manoeuvre through divisions in the ruling class. Suggestions that it does not matter what various Tories are saying against Thatcher, that it is irrelevant to workers whether or not the political establishment is divided, that the Church is criticising Thatcher and so it is said is Elizabeth Windsor are ridiculous. They disarm the workers before the enemy. Those who in the name of 'working class independence' say true socialists should ignore these divisions and concentrate on winning the working class for head on confrontation with the capitalist state is to argue that the modern class struggle, with all its complexities, difficulties, and changes, can be conducted using the blockheaded, inflexible and costly World War I human wave tactics Iran is using against Iraq. This would, and could only, result in the isolation and defeat of the vanguard. We need to learn off generals Marx, Engels and Lenin not the mullahs of 'revolutionary purity'.

If we do this we can start to break the hold the hydra headed Labourite representatives of capital have over our class. Only by purifying itself of the Labourite 5th column through the practice of the class struggle can the working class become the ruling class and this demands the full mastery of the culture and politics of society, centrally the divisions in the ruling class. Through active intervention in the politics of all classes and strata, the working class can begin to realise itself as a class and the vanguard unite around itself the rest of the class and mobilise allies.

In other words it would be a foolish general indeed who was not interested in gathering intelligence about the enemy, who did not bother about the lay of the land where a battle is to be fought, and who in the midst of battle saw a gap, a weakness in the enemies ranks, and failed to take advantage of it by bringing into action auxiliary forces.

We must fight for working class political independence setting our sights on breaking through ruling class political hegemony by striking at its weak points using all possible forces at our disposal. And at this present juncture who can doubt that the major weak point is sanctions? It would be criminally negligent for communists not to take advantage of the divisions in the ruling class over this issue offering as it does the opportunity of catapulting millions into the class struggle.

Those who fail to understand this possibility, fail to understand even a particle of Marxism, or of scientific socialism in general. Those who are unable to fight for this have not yet learned to assist the advanced working class, let alone lead it.

Our theory is not a dogma, but a guide to action, said Marx, Engels and Lenin. They were ruthless enemies of all phrase-mongering. They taught that problems of the working class struggle must be posed scientifically. Certainly the idea of manoeuvre, taking advantage of a conflict of interests among one's enemies must not be renounced but fully learnt.

When it comes to taking advantage of divisions amongst the ruling class what is

important is where we want to go, how we place demands and how we fight for them. For instance we can promote the lies of the 'next Labour government' over reforms it will bring in on unemployment benefit, abortion facilities or 'anti-terrorism' legislation. On the other hand we can fight for reforms on such matters off the existing government, not as things in themselves, but as part and parcel of the struggle for revolution — reforms being gained as by-products of the revolutionary struggle of the working class. In this way communists can lead millions in struggle, the true interests of the working class can be advanced and the illusions of the permanency of reforms under capitalism avoided. So reforms can be fought for in a revolutionary manner.

To try to ignore the government, to fight for workers' sanctions and refuse to place demands on the government, to talk of direct action and pretend this is nothing to do with sanctions, is not dictated by revolutionary principles, it has nothing to do with working class political independence, it is childish leftism which at the end of the day limits working class action and significantly lowers the stakes of what is being fought for.

A classic example of the sort of approach we are for over sanctions was seen in the Hands Off Russia Campaign. It was launched before our CPGB was established, although many of its leaders went on to join its ranks.

The agitation for workers to black the arms trade with Poland, which was aiming to annex large chunks of the territory of the young Soviet Republic, was in the main conducted by the British Socialist Party, in particular by Harry Pollitt and forces from the Workers Socialist Federation. After months of seemingly fruitless agitation a joint committee of these two organisations agreed to wind down the campaign only to find the dockers loading the Jolly George decided to act.

Their stand triggered off a wave of blacking actions first in the docks and then on the rails. Soon the Hands Off Russia Campaign embraced both the leaders of the Labour Party and the TUC. Councils of Action — called by Lenin embryonic soviets — were formed throughout the country and coordinated by a National Council of Action. The TUC was forced to threaten a general strike unless the government ended its support for reactionary Poland. Well we know the result. The TUC did not have to call a general strike the government caved in.

This in my view provides a model of how to make demands on the government and indeed the TUC. Quite rightly the Hands Off Russia Campaign has been regarded as one of the pinnacles of working class struggle. Today South Africa demands working class solidarity on an equal or greater scale.

All of what we have said so far points to the fact that we do not see South Africa and solidarity with the black masses there as purely a South African issue. Comrade Joe Slovo has said that the anti-apartheid struggle transcends the ideological divide that splits the world. Of course it does; we have churchmen, SDPers, even Tories calling for sanctions. But we say there is a need to link the question of solidarity to the class struggle between capital and labour.

This will not weaken the world wide movement against apartheid. It is not an effort to artificially graft the struggle in Alexandria onto the struggle in Brixton or vice versa. The massive imperialist investment in South Africa and the possibility of workers in Britain both pursuing their own class struggle and backing a popular revolution in South Africa, with a Hands Off Russia Campaign type solidarity movement in Britain, far from holding back working class power in South Africa will enhance it's potential.

A democratic revolution in South Africa, especially one that saw the emergence of a working class dictatorship which set its sights on taking the revolution uninterruptedly to socialism would be a body blow to British imperialism. More than that if workers in Britain take the lead in shaping the solidarity movement, if they do not tail behind the liberals and pacifists, the balance of class forces in Britain can be shifted in their favour and thus the danger of intervention of British imperialism against the revolution would be curbed. This is what genuine internationalism is all about, it is what our argument starts with and ends with.

In this way there is every possibility that the present ruling class offensive can be halted and turned into headlong retreat in front of the working class. Who can doubt this would be the best possible conditions in Britain for the black masses in South Africa. For by taking up the

whole question of South Africa in a revolutionary fashion, the working class can gain the initiative, then real solidarity not tokenism can be delivered.

THE BALANCE OF CLASS FORCES

So will the workers in Britain act? Yes, if we can provide a perspective that is not only militant but promises victory. Workers have no interest in becoming martyrs on the alter of some version of 'international solidarity'. What they want is to share the victory of the people of South Africa. The class struggle must be approached in a confident, dynamic way. When the working class has confidence it will fight, when it has not it will retreat into inaction.

The present debate on sanctions between liberals and conservative elements of society, obviously does not introduce the class struggle into the calculations simply because under its existing mis-leadership the working class has been kept inactive. In point of fact the whole sanctions debate as it has unfolded so far is a most peculiar affair.

Those who favour sanctions tend to do so on the basis of the importance of British trade to South Africa. They also warn that unless Britain is seen to side with the blacks when they win the consequences for Britain will be far more dire than imposing sanctions today.

Their conservative opponents do not question how important South Africa is to Britain. They do, though, question how important Britain is for South Africa. Japan is, they say, just waiting for the opportunity to step in to the gap left by a Britain which insists on putting abstract principle before good old fashioned business sense.

Despite emphasising the importance of South African/British trade the proponents of sanctions poo poo the suggestion that mass unemployment would result from sanctions. No more than 10,000 jobs (sic) would go they say. The conservatives disagree and claim that 100,000 is a much more realistic figure.

The working class should have no concern whatsoever about the cost of sanctions for British imperialism. But when it comes to jobs this is another matter.

Just say for one moment if the working class had forced the government to bend before its strength over South Africa. Can anyone imagine then that an employer like Murdoch would dare to sack 5,500 print workers, would the government then be enforcing its anti-trade union laws and would Tebbit be talking about how lazy the unemployed are? Of course not. Under such conditions concessions will be offered, demands conceded and the boss class would discover the virtues of its own version of new realism.

If the working class therefore takes a lead on the South Africa question far from there being 100,000 jobs at worst or 10,000 jobs at best to pay for internationalism, the workers could demand far reaching measures creating new jobs, sharing existing ones, and all at the expense of capital and not labour. Those who doubt this do not know a thing about the relationship between economics and politics. Economics might be the determining factor but only in the last analysis. In the mean time politics can play a powerful role even to the point of bringing about a change in the socio-economic system itself.

So solidarity with South Africa could be used to increase the strength of the working class in Britain and even put it in a position to topple the Thatcher government itself. Thatcher has dug herself a trench over sanctions. If we act dynamically enough, with sufficient imagination, vigour and determination we can make this trench her grave.

We are not amongst those who wish to wait for the next general election to see the back of Thatcher. We are not even out for a 'who runs the country' election like Heath lost after the 1974 miners strike. Thatcher could be brought down using revolutionary not reformist methods.

This does not mean the British revolution is going to happen tomorrow. The splits in the ruling class over South Africa, although pointing to a general decline, are episodic not organic. What this does pose, though, is the working class in Britain taking full advantage of the South Africa window of opportunity. It does not simply have to suffer one defeat after another at the hand of Thatcher. It can use South Africa and the splits it has caused in the establishment to fight for the best conditions for itself under capitalism — decadent and heading for a new general crisis though it is. But this is only possible if we begin to use the methods of revolutionary class struggle.